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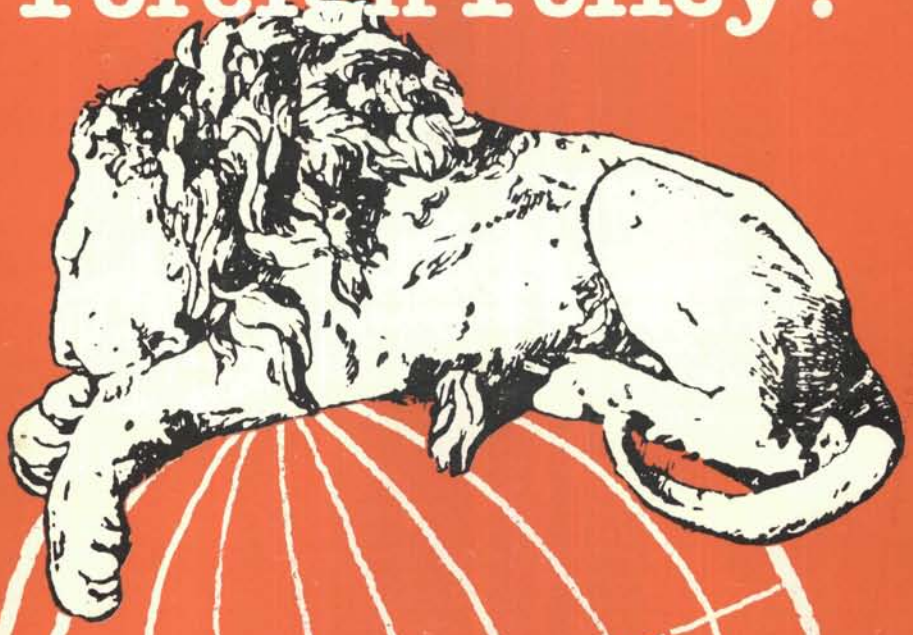

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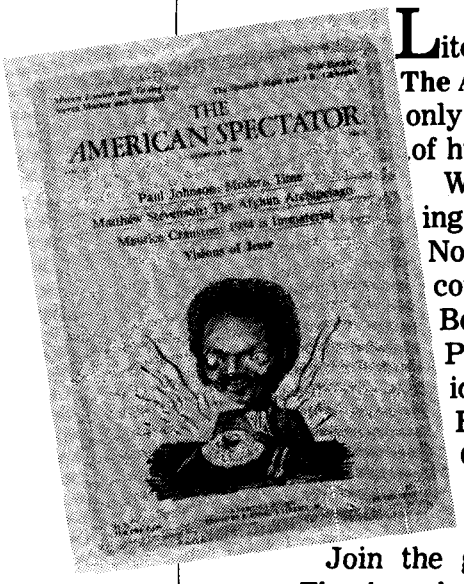

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Shusaku Endo

Fuda-no-Tsuji

WHENEVER HE BOARDED the streetcar he always recalled a short sketch by Nagai Kafū which he had read in school. It was an essay in which Kafū observed the passengers who got on and off a tottering old train between one station and the terminal, and tried to imagine what sort of life each person led. At present the man led a life in which books played no part, but for some reason he thought of Kafū's piece every time he climbed on a streetcar.

It was an autumn afternoon, and rain was falling. He sat down on the hard seat and began his journey towards the Ginza.

After many years of being out of touch with them, he was setting out for a reunion with the classmates whose desks had surrounded his so long ago. Actually, he was not eager to have his old classmates see him in his rumpled suit and worn shoes. But when one of them phoned him at his office the previous day, he had meekly agreed to attend the gathering.

The streetcar was filled with the smells of musty umbrellas, mud and human bodies. As he glanced around at the middle-school students and the lack-lustre businessmen so like himself, without particularly intending to mimic Kafū, he wondered about their lives. Perhaps the middle-aged man across the aisle, wearing a suit with frayed sleeves, was an insurance salesman. Likely he would live in a tiny suburban house, and when he got home from work he would sit across from his wife and chew his dinner with a look of discontentment; then he would lie back without a word and listen to the radio—it was as if this middle-aged fellow's entire daily routine had been set out before his eyes. Off to one side sat a woman with a soiled bandage wound around her throat—thanks to some bronchial disorder, she probably spent each day seated like a docile cow in dark hospital waiting-rooms.

As he mused over these ephemeral life histories, the man naturally came to feel a deep antipathy towards them. "What wretched lives they lead", he muttered to himself, but the words rebounded into his face as he sat there in his wrinkled suit, heading for his school reunion.

Through the grimy window he could see the rain-soaked streets of the city. The roads had been dug up and houses had been demolished in preparation for the building of an expressway; it reminded him of how the city had looked during the war. The drab telephone poles were plastered with advertisements for everything from Kibun stew to Sanyo televisions.

To the side of the road a young man in a rubber raincoat was repairing a stalled truck. The man on the streetcar detested the filthy houses, the muddy roads and the rainy sky. He knew of nothing that could form a link between himself and this outer world.

"Fuda-no-Tsuji. Our next stop is Fuda-no-Tsuji." It was almost sunset when the weary voice of the conductor called out over the shoulders of the passengers. By now only the gasoline stations, the tiny buildings and the tree-covered bluff etched blackly against the sky were reflected in the man's eyes. Beyond the bluff stood a large, white, exclusive condominium. A tiny cemetery nestled below, and he could remember a camphor tree that grew on a rise above the cemetery. He caught only a brief glimpse from the window, but twenty-one years earlier, on a rainy day like today, he had stood on that bluff and walked through that cemetery.

Shivering in the cold that day, he had tracked along the base of the bluff in the company of a foreign monk they had called Mouse. The path was choked with nettles, and Mouse had crawled along it, his meagre body hunched forward. He was a clumsy fellow, the man remembered, and couldn't even hold an umbrella properly. Rain had spattered the tiny, mousy face so faithful to his nickname.

"What a moron. . . ." The man was standing to the side of the nettle patch, his body half-concealed beneath his umbrella, relieving himself after holding back longer than he would have wished. He stole a glance at the monk. The trousers that covered those spindly legs were streaked with mud, and his fidgety movements were like a rodent's.

"Mr Inoue, where is Kodenma-chō?" The monk had finally scrambled to the top of the bluff, and his voice was carried on the dark, rain-laced wind.

"Over that way", Inoue had answered with some annoyance. "Towards Nihonbashi."

"Come up here, please. Can you see it from here?"

What the hell's he talking about? the man grumbled to himself, but with a look of resentment he started up the narrow path to the crest of the bluff.

Mouse was a foreign monk who had worked at G. University in Yotsuya, where the man was an undergraduate in those days. Unlike the priests who were their superiors, the monks primarily did office work at the university or performed odd jobs for the monastery.

Of course Mouse was not his real name. Rumour had it that

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he was a German Jew with a name something like Baflosky or Bilofsky, but not one of the students could twist his tongue far enough to pronounce his real name. They had already given him the nickname Mouse when the man slipped into this mission school after failing the entrance exams at any number of other institutions. When Mouse poked his tiny white head out of the window of the school office and passed out student identity cards and registration certificates, both his outward appearance and his diffident manner reminded the students of a fearful rodent thrusting its head from a hole in the ground.

Mouse's timorous behaviour seemed to stem from more than just his basic nature. As the war effort mounted in intensity, foreigners in Japan (even Germans, who were allies) were viewed with increasing suspicion. Apparently any pretext was sufficient for the police and the military to issue warnings to the university, which was run by an ecclesiastical order of the foreign Christian church. From time to time the students caught glimpses of military police keeping surveillance over the monastery on campus. A year before the man had entered the university, a much-discussed occurrence known as the Yasukuni Shrine Incident had taken place. All the newspapers had reported the incident, in which some Christian students had refused to make the pilgrimage to the Yasukuni Shintō shrine, a ritual required by the Ministry of Education on each Imperial Rescript Day.

The year following the incident, a lieutenant-colonel recently returned from the front lines in Northern China was assigned as military overseer at G. University.

On wintry mornings when the air was stretched taut as a bowstring, the students often saw this officer strutting his horse along the moat at Yotsuya. Like a country bumpkin newly arrived in the city, the lieutenant-colonel made an exaggerated display of his own importance in front of the many foreign priests at the school. His well-polished riding-boots glimmered a copper colour in the sun, and when he dismounted in front of the university and stiffened his ruddy, moustached face, the students were expected to salute him. When they heard the leathery creak of those boots, students loitering in the hall and puffing on cigarettes outside classes quickly exchanged knowing glances, crushed out their cigarettes, and fled into the classrooms.

The students were not the only ones to be intimidated by the lieutenant-colonel. The squeak of his boots sometimes echoed from the hallway in the middle of lectures, and the foreign priests would lift their faces uncomfortably from their textbooks. One day, as he listened to the sound of those footsteps gradually retreating into the distance, one of the foreigners softly spat out the word "*Paisant!*"

The man could still remember a cloudy morning on one of the monthly Imperial Rescript Days. The students were assembled on the small school field, where as always they were forced to listen to a droning recitation of the Imperial Rescript and observe the hoisting of the Rising Sun.

The faded flag hung limply against the overcast sky. There were shouted cries of "Salute!" and then "Dismissed!" But suddenly the lieutenant-colonel restrained the instructors who had begun to disperse and climbed up on the platform. For a long while he glared at the students with piercing eyes. His childish attempt to assert his authority was ludicrous, but no one dared to laugh or to feign nonchalance by whistling.

"You b-b-bastards!" The lieutenant-colonel tended to stammer when he was overwrought. "You're all d-d-degenerate. And the f-f-foreigners and staff at this university are all corrupted!"

As the officer ranted, the man studied the faces of the instructors standing on either side of the platform. They were all either tense or expressionless. The cotton-grey sky shuddered with a dull roar as an airplane passed in the distance. An eddy of wind swept up scraps of paper from a corner of the field and swirled them around in a cloud of yellow dust. But everyone listened in silence to the officer's outburst.

Some of the students had ingratiated themselves with the lieutenant-colonel. This they accomplished by intentionally disobeying the priests and monks and treating them with disrespect. In such a climate, the face that Mouse inched out of the window at the Student Affairs Office came to look ever more pale and diffident.

MOUSE WAS UNUSUALLY SHORT in stature, especially in comparison to the towering figures of the other foreigners. His child-like neck and limbs stood out even next to those of the students decimated by the exigencies of the war situation. His face, too, which rather resembled that of the old movie comedian Harold Lloyd, was the object of ridicule and mockery among the simple-minded students. Various tales of Mouse's faint-heartedness and effeminacy circulated through the student body.

One of them concerned an incident about a year previously, when a student had accidentally fallen from a third-storey window. He had been scuffling with some friends and was leaning against the window when the frame popped out. People flocked to where he had fallen on the ground, but he had already lost consciousness, and his face and hands were bathed in blood from cuts caused by the shards of glass. It was only after the injured student had been carried away on a stretcher that several students noticed Mouse leaning against a telephone pole with a sickly look on his face. The sight of blood on the student's lacerated body had apparently caused the monk to faint.

Another story was spread around campus by the son of the school physician. The year before, Mouse had been hospitalised with a severe case of peritonitis. Unwilling to rely on Japanese doctors, he had wept and pleaded with his superior to summon a foreign doctor for him.

Feverish and perspiring profusely, Mouse had lost all sense of shame, and to every nurse and visitor who came to see him had wailed, "I don't want to die! I'm afraid to die!" By his pillow he had placed photographs of his mother and younger sister. The room was permeated with the stifling cheesy smell of a foreigner. But the students got their biggest laugh when the doctor's son announced that he had got a glimpse of Mouse's sexual organ.

"His thing's as tiny as a string-bean!" was the report.

Having smelled the cheesy odour, heard the infantile moans of a man afraid of death, and seen (at least vicariously) that the

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monk's penis was no larger than a bean, the students' laughter soon turned to scorn. At a time when their country was at war with the Caucasian, they were stirred occasionally by a desire to torment Mouse in some sadistic fashion.

It was in the midst of such an atmosphere that Mouse and the man were brought together one evening.

For no special reason the man had remained at school after classes until late that evening. Sitting with his chin in his hands in the middle of a dusty, deserted classroom, he was staring vacantly out at the crimson sky, the darkening waters of the moat and the coal-black houses.

As he sat there absent-mindedly, from the far end of the hall came the squeak of riding-boots. Initially the sound did not register in his head, coming as it did that late in the evening, but when he became fully conscious of it he instinctively bolted from the classroom into the hallway.

"H-h-halt! Aren't you going to salute me?"

The man stood awkwardly at attention while the officer asked his name and ordered him to repeat the Imperial Rescript graciously bequeathed to the Japanese people by their military rulers.

The man faltered for words. He had forgotten that during military exercises the students had been ordered to be prepared to recite the Rescript at any time. In an attempt to mask his embarrassment, he managed to produce a faint smile. But the tactic was ill-conceived.

"Impudence!" The officer struck him across the face with his fist. When he tried to shield his face with his left arm, that arm received the second blow. Doubtless the man would have been beaten some more if Mouse had not suddenly blundered on to the scene.

Mouse had not come to rescue him. By mere chance he had opened the door of the office at the end of the hall and ventured a look with his Harold Lloyd face. Motionless, and with terrified eyes, the monk gazed at the thread of blood curling down the man's cheek, and at the dark red face of the officer.

Under different circumstances, the lieutenant-colonel might have walked away at this point; instead he encountered the startled gaze of the monk. The fact that the gawking figure belonged to a Caucasian triggered an explosion of the peculiar complex Japanese feel in the presence of foreigners. Shouting two or three words the monk could not understand, he grabbed hold of Mouse's habit and jerked him out into the hallway.

"Your ap-p-proach to education at this school is totally misguided!"

Once the lieutenant-colonel had stomped away, the man wiped the blood from his mouth with the palm of his hand, then began spitting blood out of the window. When he had finished, he turned around. In a corner of the dark hallway, Mouse stood as though frozen. His eyes lowered, the man skulked away.

EVEN IN SUCH AN ATMOSPHERE, some of the foreign priests and staff workers quietly did what they could to preserve the traditional climate of the university. For instance, monthly gatherings of the "Christian Research Association" were convened in a tiny reading-room of the library by students in the history department. These were, perhaps, a subtle form of protest against the trend of the times.

Although he didn't have the slightest interest in Christianity, the man once looked in on one of their meetings, solely out of a desire to escape from the increasing oppressiveness of student life and the mounting bloodthirstiness of the world outside.

He walked in just as a young Japanese history teacher was describing some of the landmarks of the Christian period in Tokyo. The man stood listlessly behind a group of thirty or so students. Needless to say, the discussion failed to arouse his interest. Instead he felt out of place, regretting that he had come as he glanced around at the diligent students avidly taking notes and at the backs of the solemn, white-haired, foreign missionaries.

He found the discussion hard to follow, but it seemed to be about fifty martyrs executed at Fuda-no-Tsuji at the time of the Shōgun Iemitsu.

In the tenth month of 1623 the authorities, receiving a report from an informer, arrested the leading Christians who were in hiding in Edo and placed them in a prison at Kodenma-chō. Two months later these prisoners, together with two foreign priests, were taken along the road past Muromachi, Kyōbashi, Hamamatsu-chō and Mita, to the execution ground at Fuda-no-Tsuji, where they were lashed to fifty stakes and burned to death.

Even now the man could remember bits and pieces of the discussion. One portion he particularly recalled concerned the conditions in the prison at that time, which the young instructor described with quotations from the correspondence of Friar San Francisco, who had personally witnessed the situation.

THE PRISON AT KODENMA-CHŌ was partitioned into four cells. The ceilings were low, and a single hole, barely large enough to accommodate a tiny plate of food, was the only meagre source of light. The Christians were placed in front of these cells, stripped of all their clothing and possessions down to their loincloths, deprived even of their priceless rosaries, and then forced into the cells by a shove from the guards.

Prisoners crouched virtually on top of one another in the dark, cramped cells. When the Christians were thrust inside, they jostled against the scraggy bodies and bony limbs of the other prisoners. At the same instant, their noses were assailed by a loathsome stench.

Each cell was only ten metres deep and four metres wide, and the prisoners were made to sit in three rows. Those in the first and third rows faced one another, while those in the second row huddled between them. They were packed in like sardines, and it was impossible for any of them to get into a standing position. Neither could they extend their arms or legs. Lice and fleas roamed at will over the nearly naked bodies.

Since they could not move, the prisoners, including those who were diseased, urinated and defecated where they sat. This was the source of the foul odour that startled the new arrivals when they entered the cells. Once a day food was inserted through the tiny holes provided, but it was snatched away and gobbled up by those still sound of body. A paltry amount of water was portioned out twice daily, but due to the unbearably sweltering heat inside the cells and the press of

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bodies, the prisoners ceaselessly flapped their cracked tongues in quest of water.

Besides the guard who stood watch outside the cells, twenty-four officers constantly patrolled the grounds, calling out to each other in loud voices. Whenever the prisoners grew restless in their cells, these officers would climb up and relieve themselves on top of the prisoners. As a result, the bodies of the captives were covered with filth, to the point that they were indistinguishable from one another. Invariably at least one prisoner died each day. Sometimes the corpses were left untouched for seven or eight days. Before long the smell of the decomposing bodies blended with the stench of excrement to torment the Christians.

As the young teacher quoted San Francisco's letter describing the conditions at the Kodenma-chō prison, a sound somewhere between a sigh and a gasp filled the darkening room, and shudders wracked the body of each listener. The war situation was gradually intensifying; the streets were blackened and food shortages were becoming a daily phenomenon. But life in wartime Tokyo still seemed vastly superior to that in the Edo period.

Like the other students, the man listened to the account of these brutal scenes as though he were watching an old silent movie. Such events seemed to belong to a long-departed age that had nothing to do with their own lives.

Among the incarcerated Christians were two Spanish friars and a warrior named Hara Mondo. A son of the Hara clan in Chiba and a close retainer of Shōgun Iemitsu, Mondo turned a deaf ear to the entreaties and admonitions of those around him and clung to his Christian faith. It is reported that after his second arrest the tendons of his arms and legs were severed, and before he was taken to Kodenma-chō the mark of the cross was branded into his face.

As he listened to these tales of martyrdom, the man felt as though he were standing in a rainstorm gazing far into the distance at a sunlit hill. It wasn't merely that these were men and women of faith who had lived in the distant past. They must have been endowed with a strength of will and an innate fortitude utterly unknown to one like himself who had no faith in spiritual things. Or perhaps what impelled them was a kind of fanaticism. For some reason, as the instructor described the manner of their deaths, the man painfully recalled his own miserable beating by the lieutenant-colonel several nights before. He had vivid, remorseful memories of himself trying to flee away with his arm covering his face.

Just before the meeting concluded, the man caught sight of Mouse sitting beside some students in a corner of the dark reading-room. Mouse had also been humiliated, been dragged out by his robes into the hallway. For the monk to be sitting blithely at this meeting struck him as somehow typical of Mouse—laughable and perhaps smacking of hypocrisy. He superimposed this image of hypocrisy over the stories he had heard of the nauseating smell of cheese Mouse had emitted in the hospital, and the anecdote about his bean-like sex organ.

When the gathering broke up, the man smothered a yawn and set off down the stairs alongside the musty-smelling students who had been at the meeting. Mouse caught up with him and started walking beside him, his eyes squinting behind his glasses.

"Excuse me, but can you tell me where Fuda-no-Tsuji is?"

"Fuda-no-Tsuji?"

"They were just talking about it in there."

The man remembered vaguely that Fuda-no-Tsuji was the place where the fifty Christians had been killed. It annoyed him that Mouse had picked on him instead of one of the other students. Maybe this fool thinks we're kindred spirits because we were victimised together the other night. Or perhaps he's trying to justify his own cowardice by talking to me. At this thought, the man stopped on the stairs and peered into Mouse's face.

"Yeah. I know where Fuda-no-Tsuji is, but—"

"Would you take me there? To Fuda-no-Tsuji?"

"Well . . . ." Trapped, the man fumbled for words.

STILL, ONE RAINY EVENING the two set out for Fuda-no-Tsuji. They got off the bus and walked a short distance in the direction of Shinagawa. Standing between a tobacconist's and a greengrocer's was a small temple called Chifukuji. Mouse had learned from the young historian that this temple was on the site of the former execution ground.

A tiny cemetery took up most of the temple plot; its edge was walled off by a black bluff covered with nettles. On the slope, amidst a tangled maze of arrowroot, two hemp palms and an old camphor tree spread their branches. Further up was a lush grove of oak and nettle trees that seemed to be the sole remnants of those early days.

In the drizzle, the man and Mouse stood on the bluff beneath umbrellas. The sky and the houses and roads below them were disappearing in a rainy evening haze sullied by smoke from a factory near the ocean at Shinagawa.

"Then Kodenma-chō is over that way?"

"I think so." It was of course impossible to see Kodenma-chō clearly in all that mist, so the man gave an irritated, non-committal answer.

The Christians, carrying on their shoulders placards inscribed with their names, were paraded around on foot from Kodenma-chō to Shimbashi and Mita. The names on the placards were common in Edo—Kakuzaemon, Yosaku, Kudayū, Shinshichirō, Kisaburō. At the rear of the procession, Hara Mondo rode on the back of a saddleless horse.

At the execution ground, faggots of firewood were stacked at the base of the fifty stakes. A mob of spectators had already assembled outside, nibbling at their lunches and sipping hot tea as they waited for the hour of the execution. Suddenly one of the fifty prisoners, catching sight of the execution ground, began to shout that he would abandon his faith. His ropes were loosened and he was released on the spot.

When the Christians had been lashed to the stakes, the guards walked around setting fire to the wood. It was a windy day, so the flames and smoke quickly engulfed the stakes and their captives. The two Spanish priests were the first to expire, followed by Hara Mondo, who drew his arms together as though cradling something within them before his head dropped to his shoulder.

As he stood at the place that had once been an execution

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ground, the man realised that those scenes which had seemed part of an old movie had been enacted beneath his very feet. His eyes began to swim. Yet he could not rid himself of the feeling that the martyrs were far removed from his own life. Only those, like them, who were strong and specially appointed could carry out such superhuman acts. They lived on a higher plane than the one where he subsisted.

At this thought, he stole a quick glance at the rain-drenched monk beside him. The man could almost imagine what thoughts were passing through Mouse's head. For himself, a simple student who made no claims to religious belief, these martyrs were no more than abstract images of people from a far distant world. But however true to his nickname he might be, Mouse here was an ascetic who had come to Japan to pursue a religious vocation. So it must be with unbearable shame that he compared his own cowardly disposition with the determination of these Japanese martyrs.

You couldn't do what they did. I might be worthless myself, but there's no way you could do it, either.

Being the kind of person he was, the man could surmise the limitations of someone like Mouse. Once a coward, always a coward; he could never attain the firm resolve of Hara Mondo and the other martyrs. Mouse and the man had both been abused by the lieutenant-colonel in that hallway, and both had lacked the courage even to run away. In both of them, the spirit was powerless in the face of bodily danger. He and Mouse belonged to the group that would have done anything to apostatise before reaching the execution ground.

"Do you have any family back in your country?" he asked, stirred for the first time with curiosity about Mouse. The monk's body jerked, as though he had been awakened from a dream.

"What?"

"Do you have a family in Germany?"

"Yes. My mother and a younger sister live in Köln."

"Why did you become a monk?"

Mouse clutched his umbrella and did not reply. The rain had finally let up, but the area was swathed in thick darkness. The man set out first down the hill, planting his feet wide apart to keep from slipping down the wet incline.

Thereafter he seldom even spoke to Mouse at school. The war continued to rage, and before long the air raids commenced. In place of classes, the students were transported each day to work at a factory in Kawasaki. The Yotsuya area around the campus was burned by fire bombs, and at some point the man realised that Mouse had disappeared from the school office. Someone said he had been sent back to Germany, but by then the man had forgotten that they had ever climbed that hill together.

As THE STREETCAR passed Fuda-no-Tsuji, the man momentarily recalled that day twenty-one years earlier. He remembered, but he felt no particular emotion.

When he got off the streetcar at Shimbashi, the neon lights were glistening in the rain, and buses and taxis were splashing up mud as they sped by. The reunion was being held at a restaurant called "Fūgetsu." No sooner had he arrived than he wished he had not come. His wrinkled suit was soaked from the rain, making him look even more bedraggled, while his old classmates all seemed to have arrived in taxis, their hair neatly parted, white handkerchiefs peeking out of their breast pockets. There were some who clapped him on the shoulder nostalgically, but these sporadic gestures only depressed him, making him feel as though he was an object of sympathy.

He sat down at one corner of the long, narrow dinner-table, wishing he had stayed at home as he silently sipped his black tea. Once the group at the table had reported on their present jobs and situations and swapped name-cards, the conversation turned to rumours about those absent and recollections of their teachers. With vaguely envious eyes the man watched as counterfeit friendships were struck up all around him.

"What's happened to Sayama?"

"Oh, he's living in Mie Prefecture. He works in the shipping industry."

"There was a teacher named Roku, wasn't there?"

"Yes, yes. He's still teaching."

How odd at a time like this that they should all pretend to have loved their Alma Mater, the man thought peevishly. He had no affection for his school and did not feel the least bit nostalgic about his classmates.

"Whatever became of Mouse? You remember him—he worked in the office."

For the first time the man lifted his face from his teacup and listened attentively. But it seemed that many of the group could not even remember the name Mouse. With a chuckle someone reminded the group of the looks and mannerisms of the cowardly monk, and finally there were exclamations of "Oh, him!"

Then a man named Mukai, who had stayed at the school and become a teacher there, chimed in: "I heard a peculiar story about him." After Mouse's return to Germany, he had been arrested because he was a Jew and put into a concentration camp. It was a camp set up in a village called Dachau, near the Polish border. There had been no further word about him.

"But a little while back, Bita told me about an article he'd read in a foreign newspaper."

Bita was a foreign priest who taught Law at the university. He had read in a newspaper from his homeland about a monk in the Dachau camp who had died in the place of one of his comrades. When one of the Jews in the camp was sentenced to death by starvation, the monk had offered himself as a substitute and died as a result.

"It said the monk had once done missionary work in Japan."

"Do you think it was Mouse?"

"I don't know. Apparently his name didn't appear in the article. But Bita said—"

"How could it have been Mouse? With the kind of temperament he had . . . ? And besides, he didn't come to Japan to do missionary work, did he?"

Recollections of the time Mouse nearly fainted at the sight of blood, and the legend about his bean-sized penis briefly poured out from the group amid much laughter. That Harold Lloyd face peering out from the dark office to pass out student cards and discount passes. The mousy figure scurrying around the campus, flashing feeble smiles. The well-groomed, neatly-

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attired graduates finally sang their school song and the party broke up.

AFTER THE REUNION they all flagged down individual taxis and headed for a Ginza bar for a second round. The man walked alone through the rain to the streetcar stop. As before, the streetcar was steeped in the smells of wet umbrellas, mud and human bodies. Glancing around at the passengers, who seemed as commonplace as he, the man again mimicked Kafū and tried to imagine what sorts of lives these people led. The young man across the way pulled out a pencil and, spreading out a bicycle-racing form, began to write something down. A girl who looked as though she was on her way home from evening classes was dozing with a Crown Reader on her lap. All these passengers, like the man himself, surely led faded lives of cowardice and would be buried cowards. Yet, when the streetcar passed Fuda-no-Tsuji, the man wiped the mist from the window with his fingers and peered intently out.

The bluff towered blackly behind the faintly-lit shops and houses. He did not know what kind of place Dachau was. But years before he had seen newsreel photos of a concentration camp. It had seemed much like the Kodenma-chō prison where the Christians had been incarcerated. The realisation that Mouse had been in such a place filled the man with wonderment. And if, in fact, Mouse had died for a friend—for love—then that was not a tale from the long-gone days of the Edo period, but an incident that commanded a place in the man's own heart. Who or what had effected such a change in Mouse? Who or what had carried Mouse to such a distant point? The man shook his head and looked across at the sleeping girl and the young man hunched over his gambling sheets. Somewhere in this crowd—yes, somewhere in this crowd, he thought, sitting with his Harold Lloyd face, his mud-splattered knees quivering, was Mouse.

Translated by Van Gessel

Whitsunwind

The aerodynamics of the hold of the house,
The hull of the house, its grip on the wind,
Its heeling in the seaweather,
Marvel of nailed timber,

My carriage which thunders,

The dead trees of it resurrect and
Howl through their corridors
Which thresh in the sound like
Huge fires passing by on either hand.

I draw a bottle of foaming weir; let there be
Weir foaming out of all the taps,
Running from tap to tap to augment the sound,
And all the lights too, trees of lightning
With fruits of thunder (Wagner on the recorder)

There are ghosts enough to rattle all the bolts
Like nuts in their wooden cases, and the nails
Bow silkily in their grained rafters, such a bottle
Of glowing fire for me to see by,
And the charged air broadcasting news of wars
And the sea wind rushing with its manes
To leap the mansards packed with light
And groaning like string orchestras.

Now, the calm of Whitsunday. The waxy seed
Of grasses that shines over the field
Of light laid down like mother of pearl,
And the sea still rocks, and in the ear
Water radios in stereo sealed in a shell,
A coiled shell like cockles locked in caves,
Small blowhole receiving the air's full fetch,
The sea quietly puffs tons of white sound at Whitsun.

Peter Redgrove

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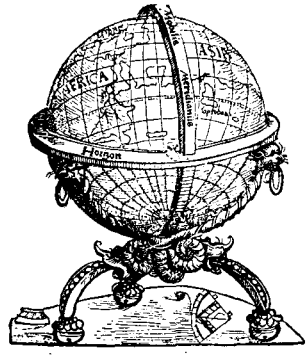
Brian Crozier

What's Wrong with British Foreign Policy?

A Time for Reconsideration



THE OUTRAGE of the siege of the Libyan People's Bureau in April showed yet again, as if further proof were required, that the conduct of foreign affairs can no longer be safely entrusted to conventional diplomacy. It is not, however, the conduct alone of foreign affairs that is tinged with obsolescence; in Britain, at least, foreign policy itself is in some respects obsolete.

There is indeed widespread unease about British foreign policy, reflected in many articles and editorials in the national press. The Prime Minister herself left no doubt of her own unease, at the time of the Falklands crisis, and she took steps in the glare of critical publicity to set up a rudimentary foreign policy machine of her own; although latterly her visits to Hungary and to Moscow (for the latest high-level funeral) suggest that, on further thought, she has decided to be guided by the professionals of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

My aim in this article is to consider the burdens of inheritance in Britain's foreign policy: to point especially to those which seem to call for critical re-examination; and to suggest ways in which the United Kingdom could formulate policies better suited than is now the case to the furtherance of British and Western interests.

Labour's first post-War government was innovative in foreign as well as in domestic policy. Indeed, nearly all the major decisions in British foreign policy since the War ended in 1945 have been taken by Labour governments, and inherited uncritically by Tory ones. The major exception to this rule has been "Europe."

On the positive side, Clement Attlee's government, with Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary, gave us membership of the Atlantic Alliance; a commitment to atomic armaments and a notably prescient understanding of the Soviet threat; together with an unconventional but effective instrument to deal with it, in the semi-secret Information Research Department (IRD) of the Foreign Office.[1]

On the negative side, it left us some of the undesirable consequences of decolonisation, including the (new) Commonwealth of Nations, together with a rooted distaste for European entanglements. To the United States, under the Truman-Acheson team, it passed on a burden in Greece and Turkey which Britain felt it could no longer afford to carry.

Two other post-War commitments—to the United Nations and to the Bretton Woods financial arrangements—may fairly be described as bipartisan, in that they were entered into by the war-time national government and taken over, amid-stream as it were, by Clement Attlee's government after the stunning Labour victory of July 1945.

Two further decisions, both negative, were taken by later Labour governments, with consequences that are still with us today. One of them, the decision to withdraw British forces "East of Suez", was taken by the first government of Harold Wilson. I shall return to it, and to its consequences.

The other, the dismantling of IRD, was taken by the government of James Callaghan in 1977, with Dr David Owen as Foreign Secretary—as quietly as the original decision to create it had been taken by the Attlee government. This decision, in particular, prompts ironical reflections. The creation of IRD is usually attributed to Christopher Mayhew, who was Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs from 1946 to 1950. Although the existence of IRD was public knowledge, much of its work was confidential. Its main function was to provide "unattributable information" on Communism in all its forms, at home and abroad.

The irony is that it was set up by an anti-Communist Labour government and destroyed by a fast-decaying Labour Party which was already deeply penetrated by Trotskyist and other elements of the hard Left. It was destroyed, in other words, by the very forces it had been set up to combat. Understandably, Lord Mayhew (as he now is) joined the Liberals in 1974; and Dr Owen is now the leader of the anti-Labour Social Democrats.

Most of the leaders of the Labour Party in the 1945-51 period (that is, until Winston Churchill's return to power) had an acute perception of the nature of the Soviet threat and of

[1] See *The Guardian*, 27 January 1978, and *The Observer* of 29 January 1978.

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Communism in all its forms—not least the specific danger it represented for social democracy. In some—notably Christopher Mayhew—there was also an intellectual understanding of the problem. In others, especially perhaps in Ernest Bevin, it was an instinctual and emotive perception, a "gut" reaction.

In due course, when Bevin had settled into his new (and, on the surface, improbable) role as Foreign Secretary, this basic reaction, communicated downward, became the prevailing wisdom in the FO.[2] In a far-ranging paper, "The Strategic Aspect of British Foreign Policy" (prepared by the FO for the Chiefs of Staff and sent to them by the Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Orme Sargent), this new attitude was set forth in terms that were remarkably frank, at times to the point of bluntness.[3]

This document (dated October 1946) is too long to be quoted in full, but calls for partial quotation to illustrate the new mood in the FO at the outset of the "Cold War." The paper assumed the continuance of the then operative US policy of "active intervention in all international questions", adding, however:

> "But it must be recognised that this assumption is not necessarily valid. The Americans are a mercurial people, unduly swayed by sentiment and prejudice rather than by reason or even by consideration of their own long-term interests. Their Government is handicapped by an archaic constitution, sometimes to the point of impotence, and their policy is to an exceptional degree at the mercy both of electoral changes and of violent economic fluctuations, such as might at any moment bring about a neutralisation of their influence in the world. . . ."

The validity of these observations, notably on the archaic nature of constitutional (i.e. Congressional) complications, has surely been established by the elections and domestic turmoil of the Nixon-Carter-Reagan period. The assumption of continued American readiness actively to intervene in international affairs was severely shaken during the Carter Presidency, although restored to credibility under President Reagan, not least in the matter of Grenada.

On Soviet policy, the paper assumed that the Soviet government was unlikely at any stage to provoke a major war:

> "But unfortunately there is every evidence, in spite of occasional tactical disavowals, that the leaders of the Soviet Union are convinced of the inevitability of a clash between the Communist State and the capitalist world. . . . It is, of course, necessary for the British and American Governments to do everything in their power to dispossess the Soviet Government and people of this dangerous idea. But it will be difficult to do so, because it is clearly a sincerely held belief and an essential part of Soviet political philosophy. As long as this delusion persists we can hope for no change in the present Soviet policy of building up Soviet industrial and military potential to the maximum in preparation for the supposedly inevitable struggle. . . .
>
> While the Soviet Government are in this frame of mind, it is hopeless to expect from them any sincere collaboration with the United Nations Organisation. . . . We consider further that present Soviet policy (even on the hypothesis that it is dictated primarily by considerations of security) is directed to undermine British and American influence in all parts of the world and, where possible, to supplant it."

Against this background, the paper defined the primary object of British policy as finding "with the United States Government a basis on which the Soviet world and the Anglo-Saxon can live together, if not in friendship, at any rate without conflict."

BEARING IN MIND the inadequate state of Western knowledge of Soviet methods in the furtherance of an expansionist policy at such an early date in the post-War period, the author or authors of this important document deserve high praise for having, on the whole, "got it right."

Much, however, was not known at the time. For instance, the fact that Stalin, having "dissolved" Lenin's *Comintern* in 1943, was secretly rebuilding it at the time when the document was being drafted, was not known until the 1970s. Nor, of course, was it known that the functions of the *Comintern* were being assumed by the International Department of the ruling Soviet Communist Party (CPSU).

Although already there were early indications of Soviet methods in Eastern Europe (especially in the Soviet zone of Germany), the incorporation of the whole area into Stalin's empire still lay in the future. As the work of the new IRD progressed, it made an increasing and ultimately a major contribution to the official perception of Soviet and international communism, still in the early years a massively monolithic phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the Soviet threat (perhaps understandably in the light of the occupation of Eastern Europe and of the rapid demobilisation of the US forces) was seen primarily in military terms. Thus, when the North Atlantic Treaty was drafted in 1948–49, it made no provision for subversion, terrorism, tele-directed *coups d'état*, the use of surrogates, or the creation or

---

[2] Undoubtedly, however, much resistance and possibly obstruction had to be overcome first.

During the War, Stalin's Russia had been Britain's "glorious ally." As Foreign Secretary, Eden had been much affected by Soviet courage and fortitude, for which, indirectly, Stalin was given a good deal of the credit. Even Churchill, an instant opponent of the Bolsheviks and author of the failed Archangel expedition of 1919, fell under the spell of the Soviet dictator in the context of the war-time "summits." Solidarity with Stalin's atrocious régime accounts for (although it does not excuse) the shameful episode of the forced repatriation of Soviet citizens to the USSR and to instant execution. (See Nicholas Bethell, *The Last Secret*, 1974; and Nikolai Tolstoy, *Victims of Yalta*, 1977.)

A number of Foreign Office officials, at that time, believed in the bright future of Soviet socialism. According to Tolstoy, they included Geoffrey Wilson, a barrister, who became First Secretary at the British Embassy in Moscow; and Thomas (now Lord) Brimelow, who went on to become Permanent Under-Secretary (see *Stalin's Secret War*, 1981, pp. 290–294). With Bevin as Foreign Secretary and a new Head of the Northern Department (with responsibility for Soviet affairs), Lord Hankey, however, a new mood of realism about the Soviet Union came to prevail at the FO.

[3] I am indebted to Dr Julian Lewis for drawing my attention to this important document, which is reproduced in full in his Oxford thesis, not yet published, on *British Strategy, 1942–47*. The paper is still officially retained under the Public Record Act, *Section 3 (4)*.

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takeover of security and intelligence services by those of the Soviet Union. Nor is this surprising, since such methods were not perfected or successfully put to the test until the 1960s and 1970s.

Moreover, at this early stage of Soviet expansionism, it would have been too much to expect of the drafters of the Treaty that they should anticipate the *global* expansion of Soviet power. The text adopted by the twelve initial signatories on 4 April 1949 thus imposed severe geographical limits on the operational area of the Alliance; which in the new circumstances of the last two decades, and more, may be seen to be insufficient, and therefore obsolete.

To make matters worse, with the benefit of hindsight, the Charter of the UN not only made no provision for the non-military methods later used by agencies of the USSR, but even provided (in Ch. 1, Art. 2 (7)) the perfect let-out for the use of such methods by the Soviets or their surrogates:

> "Nothing in the Charter shall authorise the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State, or shall require the members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter. . . ."

Among the many successes for Soviet or surrogate non-military aggression, thus exempted from the attention of the UN, are: the takeover of the Castro régime in 1968; the installation of surrogate régimes in Angola and Mozambique, and of Communist régimes in South Yemen and Ethiopia; the advent of the Sandinista régime in Nicaragua; the installation of an unconditional puppet régime in Afghanistan as a prelude to the invasion of December 1979; the overthrow of a democratically elected government in the Seychelles in 1977; and the two Communist coups in Grenada.[4]

EVERY GOVERNMENT INHERITS commitments and attitudes from its predecessor. In a democracy, it is never, in practice, easy to discard either, even if the will is there; and it may not be.

In Britain's case, the commitments that matter most, from the standpoint of this article, are (in order of appearance): *(1)* the UN; *(2)* NATO; *(3)* the Commonwealth; *(4)* the European Economic Community (EEC); and *(5)* withdrawal East of Suez. In each case, inherited perceptions of the relative importance of each commitment are at least as important as the commitment itself. Each calls for comment.

1. THE UNITED NATIONS is a "Sacred Cow", to which ritual obeisance is made in the Speech from the Throne by each incoming government. Although many critical studies of the world organisation have been written by independent scholars and unofficial observers, I am not aware that any attempt at a fundamental reassessment has been made officially. The principles upon which it was created appeared to make sense in the atmosphere of victorious euphoria that prevailed in 1945, when Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan were being crushed, and it was fashionable to assume that the military alliance that had brought victory should be given the political task of preserving peace.

A fatal flaw was thus built into the UN at birth, and enshrined in the composition of the Security Council, with no allowance made for the Soviet Union's post-War role as a predatory State, or for the evolving facts of international power. To illustrate the latter point, history has overtaken the qualification for permanency: the United Kingdom being a permanent member, it is hard to find any convincing reason (other than the world situation when the Axis powers were defeated) why West Germany and Japan should not be included.

"Decolonisation" (on the Western, not the Soviet side) has also produced anomalies, with the proliferation of small, weak, unviable, *target* States (that is, ready prey for Soviet-style takeovers), each with an equal voice in the General Assembly—a largely hostile, and mostly irresponsible, cacophony. I have already mentioned the inadequacy of the UN Charter in respect of Soviet methods.

Every now and then, the accumulated frustrations inseparable from membership of the UN provoke exasperation. We have had de Gaulle's "*ce machin*"; Lord Home's much quoted outburst in the General Assembly (on 1 October 1963); and more recently US Ambassador Charles Lichenstein's undiplomatic invitation to those who had tired of American hospitality in Manhattan to go somewhere else. We have also had more reasoned criticisms from, for instance, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Jeane Kirkpatrick. What has been lacking is any calm re-evaluation of the case for continued membership. The American decision to withdraw from UNESCO—notoriously the UN agency most heavily penetrated by Soviet supporters—is, however, a welcome step in the right direction.

2. THE PROBLEM of NATO is in no sense comparable to that of the UN, except in the one area of the obsolescence of texts drafted many years ago, to which I have already referred. In contrast to the relatively ephemeral products of the Dulles era—SEATO and CENTO—the Alliance has endured because it continues to be indispensable to the defence and security of its members. That role is no more in question now than it was in 1949. The issue here is not a fundamental reassessment but a critical reappraisal or adaptation to specific circumstances.

For obvious psychological reasons, it would be appropriate for any initiative in this direction to come *from Europe*, not from the United States. It is not an initiative that can come from France which, under de Gaulle, pulled out of the integrated military machinery of the Alliance; and it is unlikely to come from either Germany or Italy. The modernisation of NATO, in line with global expansion of the Soviet threat and the diversification of Soviet techniques, should therefore fall naturally to Great Britain.

Moreover, the modernisation of NATO is technically feasible,

[4] The second *coup* was followed by American intervention, thus breaking the habit of passive non-reaction that had prevailed since 1945. The overthrow of the leftist government in Guatemala in 1954, the American military intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965, and the overthrow of the Allende régime in 1973—to the relatively minor extent to which the US was involved—were all "pre-emptive" measures, no Communist government having as yet established itself.

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as the revision of the UN is not. Given the built-in flaws noted earlier, we are, as it were, stuck with the UN—or constrained to leave it. It is strictly *unreformable* from within. The same reservation does not apply to NATO as a freely consented Alliance of sovereign States, united by a community of interests which the UN cannot possibly match.

3. AS AN INHERITED BURDEN, however, the Commonwealth far outweighs the UN (or, *a fortiori*, NATO). Burma's decision to secede from the Commonwealth in 1948, whatever it may have owed to the residual xenophobia of the Burmese peoples, had at least the merit of logic. The advent of independent India, Pakistan, and Ceylon was thought at the time to offer hope that the old British Commonwealth of Nations could somehow be transformed into a Commonwealth of equals uniting the former imperial power, the older Dominions, and newly emancipated countries with ancient histories and autonomous cultures. The wonder is not that the experiment has failed but that it has lasted so long.

To measure how far it has moved from the vision of its creators, it suffices to reread the declaration of the Prime Ministers after their meeting in London in January 1951, with its call for a meeting with Stalin or Mao Tse-tung, its praise for the United States, and its endorsement of the rule of law. Even the list of participants has a quaintly archaic air: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Southern Rhodesia, and South Africa.

Today, nothing unites the Commonwealth, save the use of English (in all its varieties) as the *lingua franca*. Westminster-style democracy has been swept away in many countries, yielding to theocratic autocracy in Pakistan, brutal dictatorship in Guyana, oppressive socialism in Tanzania, to give but three examples. The survival of British standards of justice in Zimbabwe, one of the newest recruits, is seen to have been vitiated by the arbitrary exercise of centralised power. Some Commonwealth countries are members of alliances (most notably the older ones such as Canada and Australia); many are non-aligned (in practice, as with India, closer to the Soviet bloc than to the West). Even "imperial preferences" have gone, as being incompatible with Britain's membership of the EEC.

YET THIS INCREASINGLY MEANINGLESS collection of disparate, sometimes antithetical States continues to exercise a preponderant, though inevitably negative, influence on the formulation of British foreign policy. Speeches are made, and attitudes are struck, in function not of national and still less of Western interests but of perceived notions of what may, or may not, be acceptable to the Commonwealth—in practice, to the loudest, most anti-Western members of it.

The anomaly of American hospitality and disproportionately large contribution to the annual budget of a largely anti-American UN is matched in Britain's 30% contribution to the budget of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the provision of splendid premises at a nominal rent, at a time when the balance of Commonwealth attitudes is increasingly anti-British. To exercise charity is one thing; to pay to be insulted is quite another.

One has misgivings about agreeing with Mr Enoch Powell, who is wrong on so many things, but I found little to disagree with in his critical assessment of the Commonwealth in an article (*Daily Telegraph*, 22 November 1983) in which he referred to our continued adherence as "a diet of delusion." The *Guardian*'s Diplomatic Correspondent, Mr Patrick Keatley, reporting from New Delhi on the Commonwealth summit, then in progress, appeared to be commending Mrs Thatcher for having, in effect, used her "invisible veto" no fewer than ten times when the final communiqué was being drafted. It is not the use of a veto that ought to be in question, but participation in a gathering where it proves necessary to use it again and again.

If further proof of the essential emptiness of the Commonwealth connection were needed, it was surely provided by the fact that neither the Governor-General of Grenada nor the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States appealed to Britain (whose Queen is Head of the Commonwealth)—but to the United States for liberation from internal aggression.

It is, I think, largely inertia that prevents a reassessment of the Commonwealth, and of Britain's role in it. It must be added, however, that there is a more concrete obstacle: the Queen is believed to be deeply attached to the idea of the Commonwealth, and in particular to the ceremonial that centres upon her person as its Head. This view is understandable, not least if it is realised that the Queen's personal popularity appears to be quite unaffected by prevailing Commonwealth attitudes, however anti-British.

Nevertheless, as Mr Peregrine Worsthorne pointed out in a percipient article in the same context (*Spectator*, 25 November 1983), it is surely demeaning to Her Majesty, and unwise on the part of her advisers, that she should be required to bestow the prestige of her presence on a gathering of leaders, so many of whom are clearly guilty of gross violations of human rights. The Queen's Christmas Day broadcast, which dwelt on the theme of the Commonwealth, evoked strong criticism, including unusually sharp comment from writers known for Conservative and monarchist views.[5] Mr Powell returned to the theme in a controversial speech on 20 January, in which he argued that the Queen should not make speeches except on ministerial advice.

The drawbacks of the Commonwealth, in a general sense, are self-evident. In more specific senses, the Commonwealth, or more precisely British adherence to it, inhibits sensible evaluation of a whole range of issues, including American counter-intervention in Central America; the future of Namibia in the light of SWAPO's role as an instrument of Soviet policy; the presence of Cuban forces in Angola; the relative value of relations with South Africa, and the black African States, in the light of slow but positive constitutional change in the former and a rapid descent into financial and political anarchy in the latter.

[5] E.g., "Why did the Queen do it?" by Colin Welch (*Daily Telegraph*, 2 January 1984); and "You're out of order, Ma'am" by George Gale (*Daily Express*, 30 December 1983). Gale went so far as to suggest that the Queen should make up her mind whether she was Queen of the United Kingdom or of the Commonwealth: "She cannot have it both ways."

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4. THE SORRY STORY of Britain's relations with its Continental neighbours, in the "European" context, has been retold recently in a remarkable exercise in oral history by Michael Charlton.[6] The "European" idea itself, in its present form, and Britain's membership of it, originated with Conservative Party leaders, Winston Churchill in 1946 and Edward Heath in 1972–73, and thus qualifies as the one exception to the general rule that post-War foreign-policy initiatives have been taken by Labour governments.[7]

It is not my purpose here to recount it, but to discuss its implications as yet another inherited burden, even though it is a Conservative, not a Labour bequest. The simplest way to express the problem is perhaps to point out that the trouble about "Europe" is that it doesn't exist. Any pretence that there is, or can be, a "European" foreign policy is therefore, in my view, a delusion. This has not stopped the leaders of the member-States of the EEC from attempting to produce common policies—which, however, were doomed to failure by the unreality of the setting in which they were conceived.

The two prime examples of "Europe" in this misconceived role are (*1*) the Venice summit of June 1980 with its "initiative" for Palestine and implicit recognition of the PLO; and (*2*) the "Afghanistan initiative." In pursuance of the latter, Lord Carrington (in his capacity as President of the EEC by rotation) went to Moscow in the summer of 1981, and was duly snubbed by Brezhnev. Could anything else have been seriously expected? The "initiative" postulated talks between the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—also India, Pakistan and Iran—followed by talks involving the Afghan guerrillas, at the end of which the Soviets would be expected to withdraw amid general assurances of respect for "Afghan neutrality." I confess that when I first read of this plan I assumed it must be an elaborate public-schoolboy joke. In pursuance of the Palestine initiative, it may be cruel to recall that Britain's Foreign Secretary was, in effect, trying to sell it to the Israeli Prime Minister when the Falklands War broke out.)

None of this means that a politically united Europe (or portion of it) is theoretically impossible, or that, if it ever happens, it could not reasonably be expected to have a foreign policy of its own. But the unreality lies in the fact that political "Europe" does not exist; that the West European members of the Alliance still make a disproportionately low contribution to their own defence; and that there is no reason at all why the great bureaucracy in Brussels (which is as far as "Europe" has got) *should* have a foreign policy.

It is in this sense that "Europe" is an inherited burden for the Thatcher government.

THE DECISION TO ACCELERATE the withdrawal of British forces "East of Suez" was announced by the government of Mr Harold Wilson on 16 January 1968. It was "justified", as such decisions are, by reference to balance-of-payments difficulties, the weakness of sterling, etc. No serious attention was paid to hints, notably from the Gulf States, that relief of at least part of the financial burden of maintaining British forces in certain areas might be forthcoming.

The decision was, of course, in line with the general post-War trend of Retreat from Empire, Decolonisation, and the conventional consensus on Britain's reduced role in world affairs. What Britain was shedding, however, was far more than a mere military presence, important though that was. It was also the accumulated experience, knowledge, and trust of generations. The United States was ill-equipped to take Britain's place, except in the form of an aero-naval presence and logistical capability. Soviet power—in the form not only of Admiral Gorshkov's expanding Red Fleet but more significantly of a subversive insurgency against the Sultanate of Oman (a key to continuing flow of Gulf oil), and of a political takeover in South Yemen (Aden and its hinterland)—naturally moved into the vacuum created by the departing British.

Had it not been for a highly effective indirect British intervention in Oman, in July 1970 (that is, after the advent of Edward Heath's Conservative government), that key strategic point which controls the Straits of Ormuz would surely by now have been in Soviet surrogate hands.

Two later, and as yet unremedied, consequences of decolonisation and "East of Suez" should be mentioned. It was the government of James Callaghan that pressured the Seychelles into accepting independence in 1976, quite against the wishes of its elected government. A year later, that government, under President James Mancham, was overthrown in a Cuban-supported *coup*. Today, the "Paradise Islands" are being turned increasingly into a totalist State in microcosm, and a Soviet and surrogate base that poses a potential threat to Anglo-American facilities at Diego Garcia.

Similarly, the Sultanate of Brunei, which because of its oil wealth is a natural target for predatory powers, became independent at the end of 1983, against the expressed wishes of the Sultan, and for no very good reason other than the fact that the Callaghan government (in January 1979) had insisted on his signing a treaty to that effect.

THE BRITISH ELECTORATE in 1979 and 1983 voted for, among other things, a strong defence policy, and rejected the Labour Party decisively, in part because, on defence and foreign policy, the main Opposition party offered a programme that, in most particulars, resembled that of the British Communist Party (CPGB) and was in line with Soviet aims. Current policies are, of course, reassuring in comparison; but no evidence has been forthcoming that the non-military (or "low-level") methods in use by the Soviet Union are really understood. At a far more primitive stage in the development of such methods, the Attlee-Bevin government showed a greater, keener understanding of the problem and a political readiness to deal with it.

There is evidently a failure to grasp the realities of the Soviet Union's global challenge, of what has been called "the Third

[6] *The Price of Victory* (BBC, 1983). See, in ENCOUNTER (August, September and October 1981), Michael Charlton's three articles on "How (& Why) Britain Lost the Leadership of Europe."

[7] I write "in its present form" advisedly, to distinguish the European movement of the Communities from the International Pan-European Union launched in 1924 by Coudenhove-Kalergi, which now continues under the chairmanship of Otto von Habsburg.

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World War" and Richard Nixon has termed "the real war."[8] Manifestations of Soviet power are still treated piecemeal—or on a regional basis, according to traditional Foreign Office practice—so that, for example, the Soviet-sponsored *coups* in, say, Afghanistan and Grenada are not perceived as having a common origin.

Similarly, and largely because of the inherited burdens I have been discussing—especially "decolonisation" and the Commonwealth—the difficulties faced by, say, the FRELIMO régime of Samora Machel in Mozambique are not seen as an occasion for rejoicing but in the formal diplomatic context of relations between South Africa (*bad*) and its neighbours (*good*). A typical outcome of such traditional, and irrelevant, thinking is that Machel is received with honour in London and the British government provides financial aid, the effect of which is to reduce Moscow's imperial burden, and possibly to prolong the life of an ideological satellite. Ironically, a combination of economic collapse and military pressures has since led to a peace agreement between Maputo and Pretoria.

Again, the advent of Namibia to independence is seen as more important than the avoidance of yet another Soviet-controlled or Soviet-influenced régime in southern Africa—or even than its probable consequence, the acquisition of the important Atlantic harbour of Walvis Bay by the Soviet fleet.

SECURITY AND PROSPERITY are legitimate permanent goals of foreign policy as, in different manifestations, of domestic policy. In strategic terms, Britain's security implies collective measures in the face of Soviet military power in Europe. It also implies the securing of supplies of oil and essential materials. This, in turn, means preventing such sources and supplies from falling into the wrong hands. It follows that Britain, as a nation, is vitally concerned with the integrity of the Gulf; South Africa, Nigeria, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean; Norway and Sweden.

The potential threat to all these areas comes overwhelmingly from the Soviet Union and its surrogates. Secondary threats, such as the emergence of what one student of international affairs calls "crazy States" (of which prime examples are Libya under Gaddafi and Iran under Khomeini), must also be taken into account. These are, however, by definition less predictable and therefore more difficult to guard against; moreover, they do not in practice present as serious a potential threat to supplies as do the Soviet Union and its surrogates.

It follows that even in such areas as the Caribbean, which may be perceived as remote but through which come a substantial percentage of US supplies for NATO and of European trade with the US, Britain's interest lies in close support for the American Administration in its effort to contain and repulse Soviet indirect or internal aggression.

For a trading nation, prosperity is important; but it is necessarily secondary, in the long run, to security. In the short, or medium, term it may be economically important for British and European companies to help build the Siberian gas pipeline. In a longer perspective, it is dangerous to European security that the Europeans should place themselves in a state of partial dependence on Soviet supplies of natural gas; and it is surely economic nonsense that we should provide the Soviets with the money to pay us in the form of credits, the redemption of which is bound to be problematical.

In another context, the paper value of contracts with a country such as, say, Nigeria, may be immense, but the rewards may be meagre and the potential losses substantial if such countries default on payments and deliveries. The recent military *coup* in Nigeria illustrates the point.

In all the areas mentioned above—and there are many more—radical reassessment is clearly necessary, but it is hampered (to the point of complete mental inactivity) by the inherited burdens I have discussed. The reassessment, therefore, should in the first instance focus on the continued viability and relevance of such institutions as the United Nations and the Commonwealth. It should continue with a re-examination of the provisions of international law and of the North Atlantic Treaty in respect of the real challenges that face us.

ANY SUCH REASSESSMENT should be positive: merely to advocate a negative view of such institutions as the United Nations and the Commonwealth without suggesting alternatives would be a counsel of despair. Some constructive proposals were in fact made by a study group of the Adam Smith Institute, in its *Omega Report on Foreign Policy* (published in December 1983 and the subject of considerable press coverage).

I have to declare an interest, in that I was a member of the study group which produced the report, and the author of a draft for certain sections. One of the constructive proposals envisages the creation of "a league of democratic nations", not as a substitute for the UN but as a body that would reflect the values of free societies and stand in contrast with the deliberations and resolutions of the UN General Assembly.

My own view (writing now independently and not as a member of the study group) is that a body of this kind could fulfil still wider functions. An earlier version of the idea was developed in my book, *The Masters of Power* (1969), in which I proposed the creation of an Association of Nations, to replace the UN. The criterion for membership would not be "democracy", but simply that a State wishing to join the Association should be *non-predatory*, that is, that it should not, and should not intend to, indulge in subversion beyond its borders, or in aggression.

Although this criterion would raise problems of definition, these need not be insuperable. The main predatory States, starting with the Soviet Union, and including certain satellites (principally Cuba), but also, for instance, such "crazy States" as Gaddafi's Libya, would exclude themselves. Even if the Association were initially relatively small (in that it would not aim at universality), it would offer many advantages over the UN as at present constituted. It would in no sense constitute an alliance, but it would establish (even if it could not enforce) standards of international behaviour. It could thus serve as a substitute not only for a moribund United Nations, but for an incoherent Commonwealth.

[8] Richard Nixon, *The Real War* (1980).

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Since the main threat to our security and challenge to our way of life comes from an ideological and expansionist State, there is a clear need for a new department to coordinate political and strategic planning to meet the threat and the challenge. The terminology is perhaps less important than the concept. In the Adam Smith Report, the term proposed is "National Security Council", which is scarcely original, but offers the benefit of a recognisable analogy with the long-established body of that name in the White House.

I do not dissent from the view expressed in the Report, that it should have the status of a department, with its own staff: "It should have access to intelligence from secret and diplomatic sources and should come under the direct authority of the prime minister." To be more precise, its main job would be to counter Soviet "active measures", as originated by the International Department in Moscow.

Fresh thinking is perhaps not welcome in Whitehall. But it should, I believe, appeal to the Thatcher administration, which has a unique chance, now, to discard the undesirable baggage of inheritance and leave a better legacy to future governments.

Paradis Artificiel

Barbel-cheeked and hammer-toed,
I'm scrambling up a river bank
in a landscape by Claude.

I'm not bothered by that group
of humid Muses, or Apollo's
booming cattle, his frogs with croup.

I am myself a metaphor
the painter didn't think of. I'm
the monster the readers are waiting for.

The countryside's classic,
stuffed with temples and nymphs,
glazed like boracic,

And into Arcadia, bump,
comes me. As Terry Southern said,
girls go for ghouls, hump! hump!

The music I make them hear
is genital intarsia,
kinesthesia, or sex in the ear.

How did Europe get like this?
Look at the boring planning,
crepuscular taking the piss.

Out on a verandah the gods
are having a sundowner.
They live forever, poor sods.

Unlike the sharp-eyed fellow
who dreamed this picture up,
wetting his death-bed's pillow.

I'm off then, truffling through grass
like Nebuchadnezzar, all knees—
the artist can kiss my arse.

His world's not a pretty sight,
he and his nymphs need me
to guide them through the night.

Peter Porter

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Stephen de Mowbray

Soviet Deception & the Onset of the Cold War

The British Documents for 1943—A Lesson in Manipulation

One of the principal themes in the analytical history of Soviet political deception and disinformation is that, because of Western failure to understand and take into account Soviet deception techniques, Western governments have been repeatedly and effectively misled about the true state of affairs in the Soviet Union and about the nature and goals of Soviet foreign policy. A review of those Foreign Office files for 1943 which are openly available in the Public Record Office shows that, for that particular year at least, such views are well-founded. By the end of the year, the British government, under the influence of lies deliberately propagated by Stalin and supported by his henchmen and his Intelligence service, had begun, not merely to hope, but actually to believe that a period of cooperation with the Soviet Union would be possible after the end of the War: the wartime Anglo-Soviet alliance began to be referred to as the cornerstone of British post-War policy in Europe.

When, in the five years after the end of the War, Communist governments were established in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania and China, and when Greece and South Korea came under severe threat, there was an outcry in the West over the breach of promises of post-War cooperation given by the Soviets to their Western allies during the War years. From a Soviet point of view, the War years could more appropriately be described as ones in which the Western allies were successfully deceived over Soviet post-War intentions. Knowing what we now know of Stalin and his post-War policy, it is hard to believe that he ever had the slightest genuine interest in post-War cooperation with the West. Calculating that the War would provide opportunities for Communist expansion, he used deception to mask his determination to exploit those opportunities. His use of deception conformed with the normal definition of its purpose—which is to create favourable conditions for the success of a military or political initiative by weakening, undermining, or diverting resistance to it.

Beginning in November 1943, the Research Department of the Foreign Office produced a useful series of periodical compilations of Soviet foreign-policy statements and commitments subsequent to the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941. Quotations were taken from Stalin's speech of 6 November 1941 in which he denied that the Soviets ever had had, or could have, such aims as the subjection of other peoples in Europe or Asia or the seizure of their territories. Equally, he denied that the Soviets had any intention of interfering in the internal affairs of other states. This last point was reaffirmed in the twenty-year Anglo-Soviet treaty of alliance signed on 26 May 1942. Similar commitments to future good behaviour were entailed by Soviet alignment with the Atlantic Charter and signature of the United Nations Pact in January 1942. Stalin's speech of 6 November 1942 added a commitment to the "liberation of the nations enslaved by Nazi Germany" and the "restoration of their democratic liberties." The declaration issued on 1 November 1943 after the Moscow conference of Foreign Ministers stated that the four main allies (the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China) would not employ their military forces within the territories of other states except for the purposes envisaged in the declaration and after joint consultation.

In the course of 1943, the Soviets adopted a more reasonable, understanding and friendly attitude towards the Western allies. Demands for the opening of a Second Front in Europe were less intemperate. While there were still grounds for complaint over criticism of British policy in the Soviet press, particularly in the trade-union journal *War and the Working Class* (Churchill sent a message on the subject to Molotov and Stalin through Eden at the Foreign Ministers' conference in October 1943), some recognition at least was given to the Western allies' contribution to the war effort through victory in North Africa and the bombing of Germany. On May Day 1943 Stalin's Order of the Day referred in generous terms to the allied armies and air forces, and this was greeted in the Foreign Office as "another gratifying step forward." Soviet press comment on the Tehran conference at the end of the year was little short of lyrical in its enthusiasm. It was claimed that meetings had been held all over the USSR to acclaim the results of the conference.

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This evoked a Foreign Office comment that it would be harder for the Russians to go into reverse if they should ever wish to do so.

Stalin, at the beginning of 1942, had outlined to the British government his ideas on frontiers in post-War Europe. He proposed the restoration of Austria as an independent state, a degree of dismemberment for Germany and, generally speaking, a return to pre-War frontiers for the rest of Europe with some adjustments affecting mainly the Balkans. Stalin envisaged bases for the Soviet Union in Romania and for Britain in Western Europe and Scandinavia. As Churchill recorded in *The Second World War*:

> "In the forefront of the Russian claims was the request that the Baltic States, which Russia had subjugated at the beginning of the war, should be finally incorporated in the Soviet Union."

Neither then nor subsequently was any attempt made to disguise the Soviet intention to remain where they stood in the Baltic States.

With regard to Europe as a whole, a rather different line emerged in 1943. When Ivan Maisky, the Soviet Ambassador, saw Anthony Eden on 31 August, he said that there were two possible approaches to post-War Europe. One was to agree to divide it into two spheres of interest, one for the Russians in the East and the other for the British and Americans in the West. But if, as his government would prefer, all parties agreed that Europe should be treated as a whole, each must recognise the right of the others to an interest in all parts of it. In the course of the Moscow conference of Foreign Ministers two months later, Molotov said that neither the Soviet nor the British government had ever expressed themselves in favour of spheres of influence in Europe. In any case, he could guarantee that the Soviet government had not given any reason to suppose that they were in favour of so dividing it. Molotov earned high praise from his British and American counterparts for his skilful and constructive chairmanship of the conference.

WHILE RELATIONS BETWEEN the Soviets and their Western allies were showing signs of improvement, the *Comintern* was abolished. The resolution proposing dissolution was dated 15 May 1943 and was signed by the twelve members of the Praesidium of the *Comintern*'s Executive Committee and five other leading international Communists. The resolution was published in Moscow on 22 May. A week later, Stalin replied publicly to a question from Reuter's chief correspondent in Moscow about the bearing of dissolution on the future of international relations. He said that dissolution was proper and timely because it exposed the Hitlerite lie that Moscow intended to intervene in the internal affairs of other nations and to "Bolshevise" them. It also exposed the calumny that Communist Parties in various countries acted, not in the interests of their own peoples, but on orders from outside. Dissolution would facilitate unity of all "patriotic, progressive and freedom-loving forces" in the final stages of the struggle with Nazi Germany, and thus clear the way for the future organisation of a companionship of nations based upon their equality.

The announcement of dissolution coincided with the visit to Moscow of President Roosevelt's special envoy, Joseph Davies. Louis Fischer claims in *The Life and Death of Stalin* (1953) that dissolution followed a suggestion to that effect from Roosevelt. There is partial confirmation of this claim in a telegram from the British Ambassador in Moscow reporting that the American Ambassador, Admiral Standley, had met Litvinov (then Soviet Ambassador to the United States) at a party given by Davies on 22 May. Litvinov had recalled a conversation with Standley in Washington in the previous autumn in which Standley said that one of the chief obstacles in the way of a sympathetic understanding in the United States of the aims of the Soviet government was the continued existence of the *Comintern*. Litvinov asked Standley for his reactions to the news of dissolution, adding that it was "all Mr Davies's doing" and thereby sharpening Standley's dislike of Davies and his mission. Davies carried sealed letters each way between Roosevelt and Stalin, the contents of which he claimed not to know. Neither Standley, nor the British Ambassadors in Moscow or Washington, nor the Foreign Office itself, had any knowledge of the contents.

DISSOLUTION OF THE *Comintern* was certainly aimed at the outside world and probably at the United States in particular, where anti-Soviet feeling remained stronger than in Britain. The British Embassy in Washington reported that a two-thirds majority in the Senate for a treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union—on the lines of the Anglo-Soviet treaty—was not in prospect. The report went on to say that dissolution of the *Comintern* had caused quite a sensation in the American press. Liberals hailed the news without reservation as "changing the whole international picture." The moderate majority of the press welcomed the news but said that time alone would show how significant it was. Conservatives, isolationists, anti-Stalinist liberals, and Trotskyites all viewed dissolution as a stratagem. The report concluded that there might be a decrease in popular distrust of Russia, but the net effect remained to be seen. A US Office of War Information survey of American public opinion (dated 10 June 1943) reached much the same conclusions.

In Britain, the Foreign Office agreed with the Moscow Embassy that the Soviets were ridding themselves of an institution which had become an increasing embarrassment to them, and were seeking to allay the suspicions of those sectors of American and British opinion which were still mistrustful of Soviet post-War intentions. There was a suggestion that the timing might have been aimed to coincide with the British Communist Party's application for affiliation to the Labour Party. The Foreign Office comment included the passage:

> "The old idea of world revolution is dead and the expectation now is that the success of socialism or communism in the USSR will serve as an example to foreign countries and gradually incline them in the same direction. The Soviet government well knows that communist parties abroad will

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continue to look on Moscow as the Holy See of communism and will give full support to Soviet foreign policy."

There was a good deal of truth in this. But the words "the old idea of world revolution is dead", especially if taken in isolation, were questionable and dangerously imprecise. Did they mean that the Marxist-Leninist commitment to revolution in the non-Communist world was dead, or that the Soviets had lost the will to work towards it by all practicable means, including the clandestine?

The Foreign Office minuting especially commended an article on "Laying the Ghost" in *The Economist* of 29 May. This said:

> "The formal dissolution of the *Comintern* is a realistic and generous recognition that the old strategy was wrong. It is without doubt one of the greatest political events of the inter-war and war years. It can mean the liquidation of old misunderstandings. If it is welcomed generously by Russia's allies and followed up courageously by both sides, it can be the first step in a campaign to eliminate the suspicions and mistrust which have hung like a damp pall over Russia's relations with the outside world."

The Economist's enthusiasm was not unqualified.

> "Europe has lived too long with the Bolshevik bogey and Russia too long with the fear of capitalist encirclement for one formal act of exorcism to banish completely these 'warlocks'."

Nevertheless, *The Economist* considered that the time was ripe to press on towards a summit meeting.

At the higher political level, enthusiasm over dissolution tended to be less tempered with caution. In a speech at Manchester on 20 June 1943, Sir Stafford Cripps, then Minister of Aircraft Production (and formerly Ambassador in Moscow), said: "The policy of the international revolution to be implemented by the activities of the *Comintern*, now abandoned altogether, gave place to the inspiring policy of nation-building. . . . The decision to concentrate every energy upon internal economic and social development is the key to more recent Soviet foreign policy." In private, during the same period, Cripps spoke even more glowingly of the new prospects which dissolution had opened up for post-War collaboration with the Soviets. In *The Second World War*, Churchill quotes a letter he drafted—but did not send—to Stalin in October 1944, a letter which he described as "an authentic account of my thought." It says:

> "We feel we were right in interpreting your dissolution of the *Comintern* as a decision by the Soviet government not to interfere in the internal political affairs of other countries. The more this can be established in people's minds, the smoother everything will go."

DISSOLUTION COST THE SOVIETS nothing more than the jettisoning of what had become a superfluous piece of machinery. In the post-War period, Communist Parties were no less subversive and no less subservient to Moscow than they had been before. Clandestine activity continued unabated both through established liaison channels between Communist Parties and through the Soviet Intelligence services. Historians, basing themselves mainly on published *Comintern* documents and on the undeniable fact that the *Comintern* failed to bring off a successful Communist revolution anywhere in the world, tend to write it off as a futile organisation. But no assessment of the *Comintern*'s significance is complete which does not take into account the many years of practical training in subversive and clandestine techniques given to hundreds of Communists from different countries. Within five years of the resolution calling for the disbandment of the *Comintern*, at least five of those who signed it (Wilhelm Pieck, Georgy Dimitrov, Anna Pauker, Matyas Rakosi, and Clement Gottwald) were actively involved in Communist take-overs in East Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

IT WOULD BE QUITE WRONG to give the impression that Soviet professions of friendship towards and willingness to collaborate with the Western allies after the War were instantly and uncritically accepted. There were senior Foreign Office officials who remained persistently sceptical. When Eden saw Roosevelt on 15 March 1943, Roosevelt said that the big question was whether it would be possible to work with Russia during and after the War. He said that William Bullitt (the leader of an American mission to Moscow in 1919 and the first American Ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1933) had told him that Russia wished to see all states in Europe communistic and to over-run the continent herself. Roosevelt asked for Eden's opinion. Eden hedged and then said that, even if Bullitt were right, the Allies would make the position no worse by trying to work with the Russians and by assuming that Stalin meant what he said in the treaty he had signed with the British. The President agreed. Eden clearly had reservations about Soviet intentions during the summer of 1943; but at the end of the Foreign Ministers' conference in Moscow in October he reported to Churchill:

> "There have been many signs during our conference that the members of the Soviet government are sincere in their desire to establish relations with ourselves and the United States on a footing of permanent friendship."

Eden's reservations during the summer were largely due to the fact that, on 21 July, *Pravda* had published a manifesto by the "National Committee of Free Germany" (*NKFD*). This committee, it said, had been unanimously elected in Moscow on 12 and 13 July by a conference of German prisoners-of-war and civilians in the USSR, claiming to represent all sections of German opinion. (The first issue of the committee's newspaper, *Free Germany*, had appeared on 19 July.)

The announcement immediately aroused Eden's interest and concern. The Foreign Office and the Moscow Embassy were both taken by surprise. The British Ambassador, reporting by telegram on 26 July that his American colleague was baffled, said that it was hard to judge the committee's "spontaneity, integrity or purpose." Both the composition of the committee, which included a descendant of Bismarck (Count Heinrich von Einsiedel, a young Communist who later defected to the West), and its democratic programme seemed "to dismiss any suggestion that it is designed as a nucleus round

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which a communist régime might be formed after the War. As an instrument of propaganda to the German armies, the committee should have some value."

During the morning of 22 July, Andrew Rothstein, chief London correspondent of the Soviet news agency TASS, called on the Foreign Office—it was noted that a morning visit from him was most unusual—to say that he interpreted the announcement about the *NKFD* as signifying the Russians' annoyance at not being consulted or informed about the Churchill-Roosevelt appeal of 16 July to the Italian people. That same morning, a more guarded but similar message was received from Reuter's correspondent in Moscow. The following day, a further minute quoted another, unspecified, source in touch with the Soviet Trade Delegation in London as saying much the same as Rothstein.

On 26 July, the Ambassador in Moscow asked Molotov about the *NKFD*. All Molotov had to say was that it was "for propaganda purposes." He mentioned that it had been set up on the advice of the Soviet Intelligence service in Belgrade and that it would be powerful against both the German army and people. Molotov's rather startling admission of the involvement of Soviet Intelligence evoked no recorded comment in the Foreign Office, not even a request for a check on the curious reference to Belgrade.

A TELEGRAM FROM the Foreign Office to Washington on 1 August said that the Foreign Office were inclined to take at face value Molotov's statement that the *NKFD* was a propaganda weapon; they did not share the US State Department's fears that the formation of the committee represented a political move on the part of the Soviet government towards "a Communist Germany." The composition and programme of the committee seemed to preclude this. Its establishment might have been partly due to the Soviets' feeling that they had not been taken sufficiently into British confidence in political matters such as the treatment of Italy. A Foreign Office minute of 5 August drew attention to an item in a Soviet radio bulletin provided by TASS which indicated that the Soviet government's principal motive in establishing the *NKFD* was indeed, as Molotov had said, concerned with immediate political warfare objectives.

On 25 July a copy of the *NKFD*'s manifesto was sent back to the Foreign Office from Kuibyshev. (During the War, the Soviet government, and hence diplomatic missions, was divided between Kuibyshev and Moscow.) The covering letter said that presumably the five former *Reichstag* deputies and most of the other civilians who had signed the manifesto were Communists—if so, this was due solely to the fact that there were no non-Communists at hand. There was absolutely nothing Communist about the programme, and if there had been, it was uncertain whether the Soviet government would have allowed its publication—so keen did they seem to avoid the appearance of desiring to spread Communism outside what they regarded as their legitimate frontiers. In the Foreign Office, opinion was divided as to whether the manifesto was "a put-up job" by the Russians.

THE NEXT DEVELOPMENT was the creation in September of a league of German officers, mainly of those captured by the Russians at Stalingrad, under the leadership of General von Seydlitz. The new league joined forces with the *NKFD*. A very senior Foreign Office official commented on 28 September that he was prepared for any amount of Russian double-crossing if Stalin thought that to his advantage. But that would happen whether there was a league of German officers or not. Eden agreed but said this development would be interesting to watch—and he would, of course, have to speak to Molotov about it. In fact, he went one better and raised the subject of the "Free Germany movement" with Stalin on 21 October. Stalin replied that it was "purely an organ of propaganda." Its effect on the huge German army at the Russian front might be decisive. This was why the committee had been formed in Russia.

"Of course", Stalin went on, "the committee dreamed of many things. Let it dream. . . ."

Meanwhile, on 1 October, the Moscow Embassy had reported the Czech Ambassador to the Soviet Union as saying that, in allowing the publication of a manifesto by the League of German Officers, the Soviet government had been primarily moved by the wish to exploit a fruitful field of propaganda. The British Ambassador subscribed to this opinion "from a shrewd observer with somewhat special facilities to gauge the motives of the Soviet authorities": he therefore saw no reason to suppose that Molotov had not spoken the whole truth when he had told him in July that the *NKFD* had been set up with the sole object of providing an anti-German propaganda weapon. The views of Northern Department (the Foreign Office department concerned with Russia) were summarised in a minute dated 15 November which said that the *NKFD* was primarily intended to serve propaganda purposes (as Stalin had told the Secretary of State in Moscow), though it could serve other purposes as well if the Soviet government so desired.

Some observers at the time saw through at least part of the camouflage surrounding the *NKFD*. The *New York Herald Tribune*, for instance, declared roundly that committees did not spring up in Moscow by spontaneous generation and that the *NKFD* represented a political initiative by Russia. It foresaw an embarrassing situation if the British and the Americans entered Germany at one end with their military governments, and the Russians entered at the other end with their committee. George Bell, the Bishop of Chichester, wrote to the Foreign Office on 30 July saying that the Communists were quite obviously controlling the *NKFD*. The Polish Embassy sent the Foreign Office a report from the Inter-Allied Research Group drawing attention to the number of leading German Communist signatories of the manifesto. With the addition of later evidence, the picture becomes even clearer. In 1945, no less than eight of the signatories—Anton Ackermann, Martha Ahrendsee, Johannes R. Becher, Franz Dahlem, Edwin Hoernle, Hans Mahle, Gustav Sobottka, and Walter Ulbricht—identified themselves as members of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party by signing a declaration on its behalf. Two others (Wilhelm Pieck and Wilhelm Florin) had been members of the Praesidium of the *Comintern*.

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LOOKING BACK AT IT NOW, it is clear that the formation of the *NKFD* was indeed a real political initiative on the part of the Soviets. The *NKFD* could not have fulfilled its long-term political function if it had been set up in total secrecy. On the other hand, to have declared its real aims openly would have caused a major rift in the war-time alliance with the West and would have jeopardised the attainment of the *NKFD*'s ultimate objectives. Therefore, in accordance with historical precedents, deception was used to create the conditions in which the political initiative could succeed.

The Soviets did not limit themselves to camouflaging the membership of the *NKFD* and giving it a democratic rather than a Communist programme. They also took other, positive steps to mislead their Western allies. Andrew Rothstein of TASS, backed up by a message from Reuter's and by members of the Soviet Trade Delegation in London, introduced what can now be seen as an obvious red herring: that the *NKFD* had been set up in retaliation for the Anglo-American failure to consult the Russians over the appeal to the Italians. Rothstein was described in Foreign Office papers as a Communist, and there is nothing to show that he was not completely loyal to his Soviet employers. (Indeed, in September 1983 he was given an Order of the October Revolution in honour of his 85th birthday.) The fact that he called on the Foreign Office most unusually in the morning supports the idea that he spoke about the *NKFD* as and when he did on Soviet instructions. The line he took had two obvious advantages from a Soviet point of view. It distracted attention from the real political motive behind the committee and it increased pressure from within the Foreign Office for full and frank discussions with the Russians on allied post-War policy in Europe. Eden showed himself responsive to this pressure. But the "Italian" line could not be expected to hold good for long. It was pretty obvious that the *NKFD* had not been dreamed up at short notice as a reprisal but that it had been a long time in preparation. The Russians required a new, more convincing but innocuous explanation for the appearance of the *NKFD*.

It may have been pure coincidence that, within twenty-four hours of the British Ambassador suggesting in a telegram to the Foreign Office that there was probably a propaganda motive behind the *NKFD*, Molotov should have confirmed that this was indeed the explanation. Clearly though, if Molotov had learned from Intelligence sources of the lines on which the Ambassador was thinking, he would have known that the "propaganda" line stood a good chance of being accepted. Between Molotov's statement to the British Ambassador and Stalin's similar statement to Eden, the Czech Ambassador in Moscow came up with confirmation that Molotov and Stalin were telling the truth.

The Czech Ambassador at the time was Zdenek Fierlinger. Of him, the British Ambassador wrote in his 1943 Report on the Heads of Foreign Missions in Moscow:

> "When I arrived in Kuibyshev [in 1942], several of my colleagues . . . advised me to shun M. Fierlinger on the ground that he was in close touch with the Soviet authorities. . . . It is true that he has contacts in the administration which are denied to most of us and there have been signs which have suggested that the Soviet government were making use of him from time to time in order to express views which they preferred not to convey to the diplomatic corps direct. But I have found nothing in him to make me wish to shun him. Far from it. I have come to regard him as one of the most useful and helpful of my colleagues. He knows this country and the people who govern it better than any of them and, although he is a hundredfold in sympathy with its system, he is by no means its blind advocate."

In later years, Fierlinger went on to play a particularly villainous role in the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia by usurping the leadership of the Social Democratic Party and aligning it with the Communist Party. He was rewarded at first with the post of Minister of Industry in the Communist government, being promoted after a few weeks to Second Deputy Prime Minister. Against this background, it is not unreasonable to suggest that he was acting in collusion with the Soviet authorities in 1943 when he backed up Stalin's and Molotov's line on the *NKFD*.

NOT UNNATURALLY, German war-time propaganda made every effort to arouse distrust between the members of the East-West alliance arrayed against the Axis powers by playing on Western anxieties about international Communism. It was partly through fear that the Germans might be successful in their exploitation of "the Bolshevik bogey" that the Foreign Office tended to overlook the reality behind this unfortunate expression. On 25 February 1943, a meeting of the Special Issues Committee of the Ministry of Information, on which the Foreign Office was represented, discussed a paper on "Countering the German Campaign on the Bogey of Bolshevism" which had been drafted by the Ministry of Information. The paper, designed to analyse the German propaganda campaign and to guide the British counter-offensive to it in the period up to the Allied invasion of France, listed arguments which could be used to allay fears of any tendency of the Russians to expand westwards. Three of them were: *(1)* that the Russians would be preoccupied after the War with internal reconstruction and improvement in their own standards of living; *(2)* that they would depend to a considerable extent on help from the United States and Britain; and *(3)* that they could achieve their paramount aim of security against renewed aggression only by cooperating with the Western allies in a United Nations system—hence the significance of the twenty-year Anglo-Soviet treaty with its provision for non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

The paper continued with a list of points that could be used to counter ideological fear of Bolshevism. For example, it could be argued that the so-called "Red Terror" was but a reflection in the Nazi propaganda mirror of the reality of the Nazi terror. A positive picture of Russia could be built up by emphasising the encouragement of patriotism and nationalism by the Soviet leaders, the Soviet contribution to science and culture generally, the thriving of "the small man" in Russia, and, with qualifications, the increasingly sympathetic attitude of the Soviet authorities towards religion.

The paper argued that, in contrast with Trotsky, Stalin had followed a policy of building up Russian strength and main-

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taining friendly diplomatic relations with the outside world. If Stalin maintained the *Comintern* in being, it was merely as a second line of defence, which would be proved superfluous to the extent that he could rely on cooperation from Britain and the United States. There had been a change in the type of personnel in power in the USSR. The ideologues and doctrinaire international revolutionary types had increasingly been replaced by people of the managerial and technical type, both military and civil, who were interested in getting practical results. Even supposing that the USSR wanted to extend its influence throughout Europe, it would not have the physical resources to make that influence effective. The food and consumer goods that Europe would need could come only from the West.

In short, the paper summarised many of the war-time beliefs about the Soviet Union which turned out, in the immediate post-War period, to be illusory. The author of the paper, H. Peter Smollett, was head of the Soviet Relations Division of the Ministry of Information. According to Chapman Pincher's book, *Their Trade is Treachery* (1981), Smollett was a Soviet agent—a statement which has not been challenged.

SMOLLETT WAS IN OFFICIAL LIAISON with the Soviet Embassy in London on behalf of the Ministry of Information. On 3 June 1943, he addressed a letter to a member of the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, copying it to Northern Department. In it, he said that his division had entertained members of the Press Department of the Soviet Embassy on the anniversary of the signing of the Anglo-Soviet treaty. In the course of the evening, the Counsellor, Konstantin Zinchenko, had drawn attention to the fact that the Soviet government had now officially stated that the Anglo-Soviet treaty represented a long-term trend of Soviet foreign policy. The Russians had gained confidence in the British but it was important to remember the terrific strain the Russians had been through in the last 30 years—the First World War, the Revolution, the Civil War, the famine, the New Economic Policy, collectivisation, the Five-Year Plans, the German attack, and the vast Soviet war losses. If the Russians had to lift themselves out of misery once again by their own boot-straps, this would strain the nation physiologically (*sic*) and morally to an extent which no responsible government could admit. Friendship with the British would, the Russians hoped, bring a structure of trade that would allow a slower pace of re-industrialisation and the import of consumer goods—and, through political collaboration with a view to establishing real security in the West, would obviate the necessity for excessive rearmament. Such a policy might well fit in with British self-interest in a period when British export trade in general might have to undergo structural readjustments.

Smollett commented that, coming as an unsolicited statement from Zinchenko, he thought it a most significant development and believed that it fitted in completely with everything he and the member of the Political Intelligence Department had been thinking for some time. Smollett asked that, if his report were to be used in a summary, no hint of its origin should be allowed to creep in. He suggested, also, that his letter should be shown to those in a higher level in the Foreign Office.

A Foreign Office official thought that Zinchenko had undoubtedly represented the views of a very large section of the people of the Soviet Union; and it was the first time he had heard of a Soviet official expressing them so openly. How far these views represented official policy could not be decided without further evidence.

ON 19 JUNE, AN ARTICLE APPEARED IN *The Times* by "A Correspondent", under the headlines

RUSSIA LOOKS FORWARD
GROWING CONFIDENCE IN THE ALLIANCE

The author drew attention to a statement by Stalin, on the occasion of the Allied landing in North Africa, that he personally was convinced that the allies could be trusted. The article concluded that the theme of faith in the allies ran parallel with another campaign of longer standing, designed to anchor firmly in the public conscience a feeling of pride and confidence in the Russian national genius. There was no realm of human activity in which Russians had not made their contribution. The People's Commissar for Education of the Russian Republic had said in a recent broadcast:

> "We shall be victorious because Russian armies always have been victorious. Russian troops were in Berlin in 1760. In 1814, they entered Paris. They were welcomed with flowers for the people knew they would not harm civilians. Having completed their military task, they returned home. . . . Our Fatherland did not need to seize foreign territories. It has no need for them now."

The Foreign Office noted a strong similarity between some of the phrasing in this article and Smollett's report on his conversation with Zinchenko. A member of News Department learned "very confidentially" that the author of the article was Peter Smollett.

An article by "A Correspondent" on "TRADE WITH SOVIET RUSSIA—PROSPECTS OF ECONOMIC COLLABORATION—THE PART BRITAIN CAN PLAY" had already appeared in *The Times* on 15 June. The article was similar in style to Smollett's article of 19 June, but Robert Barrington Ward, the Editor of *The Times*, told the Foreign Office that it had been written two months earlier and was "in no way inspired by the various hints that have lately been emanating from the Soviet Embassy."

In fact, the Embassy had been doing more than hint. On 1 June, the Soviet Ambassador, Ivan Maisky, told R. A. Butler, then President of the Board of Education, that post-War understanding would depend in the first place on the economic factor. Russia offered a big potential market for Britain, but long-term credit would be essential. He went on to say that disbandment of the *Comintern* was an indication that the Soviet Union was looking ahead to real collaboration in Asia and Europe. As a result of disbandment, the British Communist Party might well, in future, switch to constitutional methods.

Interestingly enough, one of the earliest sources to arouse Foreign Office interest in post-War Anglo-Soviet trade was a well-known Soviet dramatist, Valentin Katayev. As early as 24

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February 1943, Katayev told an official of the British Embassy in Kuibyshev that the Soviet Union would maintain into the post-War years the war-time heavy industry that had been built up, but that she would then be in need of articles of light industry and would buy from England and America as much as they could supply. Katayev's remarks made enough impression on the Foreign Office to be remembered and taken into account when Smollett reported on his conversation with Zinchenko.

The isolation of the British Embassy in the Soviet Union was so complete that the Ambassador complained to Stalin in February 1943 that Stalin and Molotov were the only two Russians with whom he was able to have stimulating conversations. This isolation from normal diplomatic contact with the local population explains why the remarks of so unlikely a source on Soviet post-War economic policy as Katayev should have received attention. But the Embassy's isolation had another consequence. Because controls over contact with foreigners were so strict, no Soviet citizen, least of all a man of some prominence, could afford to run the risk of meeting officials from foreign embassies without reporting to the Soviet authorities. Since Katayev was clearly something more than a chance informant of the British Embassy, it is safe to assume that his contact with it was licensed by the Soviet authorities, and that he spoke as he did on instructions.

According to a Foreign Office comment, the dissolution of the *Comintern* fitted in well with the concept of "socialism in one country", and with the increasing trend towards nationalism in the USSR. Just as, to Western ears, the misleading expression "peaceful co-existence" has almost irresistible overtones of the lion lying down with the lamb, however often it may be defined for the party faithful as an intensified form of international class struggle, so "socialism in one country" suggested powerfully that the Soviet Union under Stalin was so preoccupied with internal developments that it had lost interest in the expansion of the Communist world. A paper sent by MI5 to the Foreign Office in September 1945 on "Russia's European Policy as Reflected by German Communist Groups in Great Britain" argued against this view, and quoted Stalin as having written before the War:

> "Socialism victorious in one country cannot regard itself as fully secure against the danger of military invasion and against attempts to restore capitalism. The victory of socialism in one country is not complete. The problem . . . can be solved only by uniting the serious efforts of the international proletariat with the still more serious efforts of the entire Soviet people."

Both in his paper for the Special Issues Committee and in his article for *The Times* Smollett drew attention to the theme of nationalism in the Soviet Union. There were indeed further signs in 1943 of a revival of past Russian traditions, a trend which had already appeared in 1942. For example, portraits of the Czarist Marshals Kutuzov and Suvorov were prominently displayed on the walls of Stalin's audience chamber in the Kremlin, while Marx and Engels were relegated to a corner. An officer corps was re-created in the Red Army, and traditional badges of rank—including epaulettes—were reintroduced. Stalin became Marshal of the Soviet Union. Controls over the Russian Orthodox Church were to some extent relaxed. Ranks given to officials in the Public Prosecutor's Office were reminiscent of the era of Peter the Great. Other changes affected education, industrial discipline, and so on. Finally, a new Soviet national anthem devoid of international references was adopted in December 1943.

The revival of an officer corps was regarded in the Foreign Office as showing most clearly the increasingly conservative character of the Soviet régime and was seen as a step towards the creation of a bourgeoisie, while the new national anthem was described as another nail in the coffin of "the Bolshevik bogey."

Internal evidence of the growing influence of nationalism inside Russia was supplemented by what Russians said in official and unofficial conversations with Westerners. For instance, on 2 September 1943 when Eden lunched with Maisky and John Winant, the American Ambassador in London, to prepare the ground for the conference of Foreign Ministers in Moscow, Maisky launched into a long survey of the history of Russia and the British Empire, demonstrating the similarity of their historical development and the complementary nature of their national interests. In February, Katayev had quoted Rudyard Kipling to a British official in Kuibyshev, and referred to Britain and the USSR as two great empires which should remain friendly after the War. He made remarks about the Red Army with its epaulettes which the official took to mean that the new national structure and discipline in Russia would not favour revolution in Europe.

On 27 October, the British Legation in Stockholm reported that Willi Boehm (a prominent Hungarian socialist exile who worked in the Press Reading Bureau attached to the Legation as a Hungarian press reader and source of political intelligence on Hungary) had spent four days in Scotland on his way back from London to Sweden in the company of Razin, the newly appointed First Secretary at the Soviet Embassy in Stockholm. Asked by Boehm if the *NKFD* was a political or a propaganda weapon, Razin replied that it was both. From the propaganda point of view, it was very valuable for demoralising the German army. From a political point of view, it was a defence against the misuse of Germany against the Soviets.

Razin went on to say that the Soviets had no intention of "bolshevising" Germany or South-eastern Europe. On the contrary, every disorder in Europe would be against Soviet interests, which demanded that Europe should resume production immediately after the War and that all anarchy should be avoided. The Soviet Union was resolved that both in Germany and in other states pro-Soviet elements should always be in power. After victory, the Soviets would possess a strong army; but the Soviets' economic foundation grew weaker with every day of the War. The machinery of production was going to pieces. The Soviets needed the help of

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England and America. Preconditions for collaboration were that friendship towards the Soviet Union should be sincere, that there should be no intrigues, and that a second front in Europe should be opened.

Such was the dearth of unofficial expressions of view by Soviet officials at the time, that this account of a conversation with Razin was minuted all the way up through the professional Foreign Office hierarchy. Particular attention was paid to Razin's remarks about the Soviet Union's post-War economic weakness. There were reservations about whether Razin was trustworthy and had been correctly reported. Northern Department commented that what he said about economic weakness was not altogether true; at the same time, the department had always taken the view that Russia would need Anglo-American assistance after the War, and that Soviet energies would largely be absorbed in the task of reconstruction.

What the Foreign Office did not know was that Razin was the chief representative in Sweden of Soviet Intelligence. He is described in some detail in *Empire of Fear* (1956) by Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov, the Soviet Intelligence couple who had worked under Razin in Sweden, and who received asylum in Australia in 1954. What was also not appreciated at the time by the Foreign Office was that the "weakness of the Soviet Union" was a theme that had been used by the Soviets in the 1920s for deception purposes. Razin's remarks are, in fact, a good example of what Anatoliy Golitsyn has called the "weakness and evolution" pattern of disinformation. Two themes in particular, used by Smollett in his paper for the Special Issues Committee—the thriving of the "small man" in Russia, and the replacement of ideologues by managers and technicians—had also been used in the 1920s. In the 1960s and '70s more was to be heard of this second point.

THE OVERWHELMING IMPRESSION left by all the available evidence in 1943 was that the Russians were neither interested in nor capable of dominating a large part of post-War Europe. Once they had achieved security, they would be more interested in retiring into their own camp, healing their wounds with the help of Anglo-American poultices and, by and large, leaving the rest of the world to sort out its own problems. The British view of Soviet policy in Europe was set out in a draft Cabinet paper drawn up by the Foreign Office in July 1944. It said that Britain had a vital interest in the independence of the European nations and in the avoidance of domination of them by either Germany or Russia. The foundation of Britain's post-War European policy must be the Anglo-Soviet alliance, based on a joint interest in preventing the recurrence of German aggression. It should not be assumed that a conflict of interests between ourselves and the Russians was inevitable in any region of Europe.

The main Soviet interest in Central Europe was to prevent Germany from ever again threatening Russian security. Although the Soviets were hostile to the pre-War, semi-authoritarian régime in Poland, they were now ready to see a new régime there with a broad basis of popular support in the democratic Peasant and Socialist parties. There was, therefore, reason to hope that Poland would be left with genuine independence and free from excessive Russian interference. Equally, the Soviets had disliked the pre-War oligarchy in Hungary. There was danger of a recurrence there of the excesses of the [Communist] Béla Kun régime of 1919—but it did not follow that the Soviet Union would necessarily foster such developments.

Indeed, there had been no signs of any Soviet desire to impose Communist régimes in any of the Central European countries. Russian relations were in fact closest with Czechoslovakia, a *petit-bourgeois* country with a capitalist structure. The USSR seemed perfectly prepared to accept the present social structure there. And there was no reason to suppose that there would be any clash between Soviet and British interests in Austria. As *The Times* put it on 30 September 1943:

> "No essential differences of interest or purpose divide the three great nations. Unity between them is the only foundation on which both a sound British foreign policy and the hopes of lasting peace can be built."

It is not fanciful to suppose that Stalin appreciated at an early stage that the Second World War would present opportunities for a rapid expansion of the Communist world. Louis Fischer, for example, recorded in *The Soviets in World Affairs* (1930) that, after it had become apparent in the 1920s that the Revolution was not going to spread like wildfire as Lenin had hoped, expectations of future revolutions tended to be associated with the next world war. The MI5 paper already quoted had referred to Lenin's dictum that "wars cause revolutions and revolutions lead to wars."

THE PROFESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP towards the Western allies which preceded the onset of the Cold War were characteristic of Stalin's technique. Boris Souvarine summed it up when he wrote in 1939 that Stalin "took care always to say the opposite of what he did and to do the opposite of what he said." Anticipating opportunities for Communist expansion at the end of the War, it came as naturally to Stalin in 1943 as it had to Lenin before him to seek to disarm potential resistance to his designs by misleading his adversaries (including his temporary allies) about his own intentions.

Stalin enjoyed the services of a highly organised Intelligence apparatus which provided him with channels to support his deception, and sources in the West who could monitor reactions to it. He had, in addition, the facility to use institutional or political change in the Soviet Union—often dictated primarily by other needs—to give additional credence to his deception. For example, the appeal to nationalistic instincts and military traditions was presumably intended primarily to serve the needs of military discipline and to harness the energies of the whole population of the USSR to the war effort under Communist leadership. But it also helped to spread the illusion in the West that the Soviet system was in process of evolution into a more normal nation-state. Lastly, Stalin bolstered his professions of friendship towards the West with appeals to capitalist cupidity.

It would have been possible to argue in 1943 that Marxist-

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Leninists were people who believed that Communism was historically inevitable as the highest stage of political and social development, and that it was their mission to work towards that stage through the expansion of the Communist world wherever possible and by whatever means were practicable and expedient. Stalin, whatever his aberrations and excesses, remained a Marxist-Leninist and therefore committed to Communist expansion. The true nature of Soviet external policy had been exposed by Soviet occupation of the Baltic States. More remote precedents had been set by Soviet actions in Mongolia and, for a short while in Eastern Poland, in the year 1920.

From these, it was deducible that, wherever the Red Army established a presence, attempts would be made to install pro-Soviet and indeed Communist governments. Further, from the Marxist-Leninist point of view, there was an irreconcilable conflict between the Communist and Capitalist systems. Stalin was a proven, systematic liar like Lenin before him. Therefore, everything that he or his mouthpieces like Molotov, Maisky and others said to Western statesmen on the subject of friendly post-War cooperation with the Western allies should be systematically disbelieved. Evidence apparently supporting the veracity of the Communist leaders' statements emanating from Communist or near-Communist sources such as the Soviet press, Rothstein, Fierlinger, Razin, Katayev, *et al.* should be taken at the opposite of its face value. In other words, it should be read as indicating that there were indeed ulterior political motives behind both the Soviet professions of friendship and the setting up of the *NKFD* which Stalin and his subordinates were anxious to disguise. Their stated wish to see "friendly, independent" governments in Eastern Europe was intended to mask their real designs. It therefore behoved the Western allies to do their utmost to limit the western advance of the Red Army and to forestall as far as possible its occupation of non-Russian territory.

ANYONE WHO HAD ARGUED THUS in 1943 would have been proved right within three years. But at the time he would have been denounced, and not only in the Foreign Office, as a crank and a dangerous one at that. The Bishop of Chichester, George Bell, who had petitioned for help for the war-time anti-Nazi resistance movement in Germany, read the *NKFD* right and saw more clearly than most the Soviet threat to Eastern Europe. Arguably, he spoiled his case by overstating the likely receptiveness to Communism of the Germans and other Europeans, and by linking it with arguments for a "soft peace" with a post-Hitler Germany. He earned severe comment in the Foreign Office:

> "The spring of his action is, as we have always suspected, the communist bogey: and he looks to alliance with his 'good Germans' to meet that bogey. He and his like will land us in a new war in half a generation if they are given their way."

It is not difficult to discern in the Foreign Office files for 1943 opinions reflecting naivety, idealism, and Russophilia on the one hand, and scepticism, realism, and Russophobia on the other. The files quoted in this article provide no basis for arguing that British war-time foreign policy was influenced by "crypto-Communists" or hitherto unidentified Soviet agents in the upper reaches of the Foreign Office hierarchy.

What they do show is that Communists, near-Communists and Soviet agents—whose affiliations were in some cases known or partly known at the time—were able to influence British official thinking about and therefore policy towards the Soviet Union, primarily because of a weakness, common to Russophiles and Russophobes alike, in the Foreign Office's assessment of information on the Soviet Union, especially when it seemed to coincide with their hopes and expectations. Information from one Communist source was accepted as independent confirmation of information from another Communist source. None of the officials showed any awareness of Soviet political deception technique. Nobody had warned them about it and they were not, in any systematic way, on the lookout for it. Ironically, to deceive the Germans over Allied landings in North Africa and France, British colleagues in other departments were at the same time using stratagems similar to, but more technically sophisticated than, those of the Russians.)

In 1957 the Soviets under Khrushchev began to embark on a systematic programme of strategic political deception on a grander scale than had been attempted under any of Khrushchev's predecessors. The evidence quoted in this article shows that strategic political deception exists as a weapon in the Soviet political armoury over and above the more generally recognised tactical techniques of disinformation (such as the circulation by the *KGB* in Africa and elsewhere of forged British or American official documents).

Given the existing 30-year rule governing the release to the public of British official archives, a few more years will have to elapse before it will be possible for an outside observer to begin to assess the extent of the Foreign Office's vulnerability to Soviet strategic political deception in the years since the new Soviet deception programme was initiated. But it is not too soon to make the point that the mere existence of the hitherto largely neglected phenomenon of Soviet strategic political deception adds weight to the appeal for a thoroughgoing reassessment of the totalitarian threat, based on a reappraisal of what we think we know about the innermost workings of the Soviet "collective leadership" and its relations with its Communist allies. In particular, the lesson of the period from 1943 to 1945 is that we should reassess the extent to which our knowledge of, and opinions about, the Communist world are derived from sources controlled or inspired by the Communist authorities themselves.

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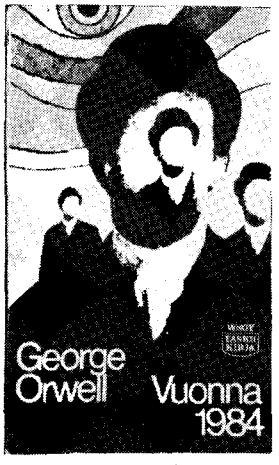
Leopold Labedz

Will George Orwell Survive 1984?

Of Doublethink & Double-Talk, Body-Snatching & Other Silly Pranks (II)

7. The Question of Orwell's Socialism



IN THE "progressive" rites for St Orwell the *leitmotif* was that he was a "socialist", and therefore the present representatives of the "socialist tradition" are his legitimate heirs. The putative body-snatchers' foul deed consisted of claiming spiritual affinity with Orwell, but the "progressives" made no attempt (with one exception, to which I'll return in a moment) to substantiate the charges. Why not falsify the "body-snatchers'" claim by contrasting it with the authentic voice of Orwell *on specific issues*? Not on your life. Instead there were selective quotations, general labels, and conventional Left stereotypes.

In fact, no one among the mysterious corps of "body-snatchers", whoever they were, ever denied that Orwell considered himself "a socialist." This did not prevent his latter-day "followers" from triumphantly proving it with a well-known quotation about *1984*:

> "My recent novel is *not* intended as an attack on Socialism or on the British Labour Party (of which I am a supporter) but as a show-up of the perversions to which a centralised economy is liable and which have already been partly realised in Communism and Fascism. . . . The scene of the book is laid in Britain in order to emphasise that the English-speaking races are not innately better than anyone else and that totalitarianism, *if not fought against*, could triumph anywhere."

If this remark points to anything, it is to the need to fight totalitarianism (the italics are Orwell's own), but this is not the point emphasised by those who quote it so frequently. By claiming the "socialist" Orwell as their patron saint they provide an alibi for themselves.

In the same passage Orwell stressed that "totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere." It is a supreme irony that those who, following his advice and example, are fighting totalitarianism are denounced as "cold warriors" and "body-snatchers" by those who concentrate on *anti*-anti-Communism. It is, of course, their right to reject anti-Communism; but to invoke the anti-Communist Orwell for that purpose is an intellectual fraud.

Anyway, what is in the "socialist" name? When Orwell used it 35 years ago it was still possible to adopt the label and be "a fervent anti-Communist." But like so many other words, concepts, and ideas, "socialism" no longer signifies today what it signified for Orwell. Would he believe today that (as he put it on joining the ILP) "the only régime which in the long run will permit freedom of speech is a socialist régime"? At that time (as well as now), the believers in a socialist Utopia were, as Sidney Hook put it, "judging capitalism by its operations and socialism by its hopes and aspirations." The difference is that today the experience of "the perversions of the centralised economy" (and of centralised power in the hands of the Party-State) is far wider, deeper, and better known.

It is, naturally, impossible to say whether Orwell would still use the term "socialist" in the present circumstances, after an additional 35 years of historical experience. His attachment to equality—his belief in the common decency and common sense of the common man—might or might not be represented for him by the same label now. But if we cannot say what Orwell would call himself today, we can be quite certain that he would not be a "*progressive*."

Except for a very short period of time, he never was. And it is because he abandoned the Left's "smelly little orthodoxies" of the "progressive" stance that he achieved his greatness. Had he not, Orwell would not be Orwell, but yet another conventional Utopian. Without his contempt for the conventional wisdom of the day, and his anti-totalitarian passion and understanding, he would have written neither *Animal Farm* nor *1984*: and he would have been forgotten.

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I HAVE NO DOUBT that Orwell would never have shared the post-War illusions of the "progressives", illusions which he has done so much to dispel. Can one imagine him falling for all those self-renewing fallacies which marked the deceptive expectations of the Left (and, often, also of the Right) about the Soviet Union? Can one visualise the author of *Animal Farm* subscribing to the "theory of convergence" of Western and Soviet societies in the imminent "liberalisation" of the USSR after "the Thaw"? (More than twenty years ago Isaac Deutscher assured us that "the Goddess of Liberty" would soon be moving from the West to the East. . . .) Would Orwell enthuse in the 1980s as each new "Big Brother" generates Western "liberal" expectations for fundamental reform? Would he affirm, with Michael Walzer and Richard Lowenthal (in Irving Howe's *1984 Revisited* anthology), that the Soviet Union is no longer totalitarian? Would he hold with Roy Medvedev, writing in *l'Unità* (18 December 1983), that computerisation would facilitate liberalisation in the USSR, but would produce only a "Great Fear" in the USA?

In 1984, sad to record, Big Brother still loves his Winston Smiths in all the Communist countries. In the USSR dissidents are in mental prisons or in Gulag labour camps. In Poland *Solidarity* has been suppressed. In Czechoslovakia the voluble hopes of 1968 have given way to the silence of the grave. And nobody (as Senator Moynihan put it) "swims through shark-infested waters to reach the shores of East Germany. . . ."

As early as 1940, Orwell referred to "the squalid farce of left-wing politics." Can one imagine the author of *1984* calling massacre a "liberation" as so many "progressives" did in respect of Viet Nam and Cambodia? Or adopting a pacifist position—which he never did when he was alive? Saying "Better Red than Dead" rather than pointing out that "peace" propaganda "is helpful to totalitarianism"? In short, embracing those whom he denounced and who, poor impoverished spirits, are so eager to embrace him now? All this because he was a "socialist"? He was never that kind of "socialist."

8. *The Case of Simon Leys*

ONE AUTHOR, SIMON LEYS (Pierre Ryckmans), who unlike the Williamses and the Cricks must be taken with intellectual seriousness, has presented a view somewhat similar to theirs on this point.[12] Simon Leys was the single most important source describing the real character of the Chinese "Cultural Revolution" in his reports and books. He saw and analysed the operation of Orwell's mechanisms—"Big Brother" and "Two Minutes' Hate" with *The Little Red Book*. At the time when Maoism was becoming fashionable among the "revolutionary" romantics in California and France, he brought realities into sharp focus. In his splendid polemic against Han Suyin[13] he performed the same valuable service in dissecting Chinese propaganda techniques as his predecessors did in Stalin's time in exposing the "Red Dean", Hewlett Johnson, or D. N. Pritt, Q.C. He certainly needs no introduction to Orwell either in print or in reality. I find it, therefore, all the more inexplicable that his book on Orwell is marred by a certain incomprehension of the wider, larger issues involved, even though it displays at the same time a highly perceptive analysis of Orwell's writings. Stressing Orwell's conversion to "socialism", he goes so far as to contend that:

> "His socialist 'illumination' was as sudden and absolute as the *satori* experienced by a Zen adept, or one could say that *The Road to Wigan Pier* was his Way to Damascus."

One "could say" many things, but some of them obviously trouble Simon Leys, for in the very next sentence he tries to handle the possible objections to this rather fanciful portrait of Orwell, whose "Englishness" and commonsense empiricism escape him. He indulges in some mystagogic flights of imagination:

> "These metaphors may appear inappropriate when we consider his innate allergy to all forms of religion (and more particularly he felt an even stronger revulsion for a certain form of socialist mystique that used 'to draw with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, "Nature-cure" quack, pacifist and feminist in England'); and yet it seems that only a reference to a religious experience could adequately account for the instantaneous, total and unshakeable character of his new commitment."

Total and unshakeable? Leys makes Orwell into a "true believer" which he emphatically was not. His socialism was demonstrably not a form of religious experience (as Leys's comparison of Orwell with Simone Weil seems to imply).

ON A MORE DOWN-TO-EARTH level Simon Leys maintains that "For Orwell, socialism provided the final solution of a very personal problem: how to communicate with the oppressed." Judging by his last novel which was not a socialist communication, it was hardly a solution, much less the "final" one.

All Leys's quotations from Orwell showing his concern for "the underdog" and his attachment to "justice and liberty" as fundamental values of socialism, merely underline the fact that the nature of his political commitment to "socialism" was pretty vague, that there was a certain incongruity between the concrete character of his specific reactions to the political events of his epoch and the rather general nature of his socialist commitment. Contrary to what Bernard Crick makes of Orwell, he was not really a systematic political thinker (and Crick's

[12] In his new book called *Orwell ou l'Horreur de la Politique* (Paris, Hermann, 1984). Excerpts from it were published in *Commentaire* (Paris, No. 24 & No. 25), in *Le Monde* (30 December 1983), and in *Quadrant* (Sydney, December 1983).

[13] Simon Leys, "The Double Vision of Han Suyin", ENCOUNTER, November 1980.

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comparison with Hobbes is wildly out of place). His genius lay in giving imaginative expression to the understanding of the *sui generis* experience of the epoch: the totalitarian system. This was a remarkable achievement, considering that even now, after so many decades, there is so little understanding of it among those who have no direct personal knowledge of it. Still, this is no reason to make Orwell into a theoretician, or to portray him as a saint or a knight *sans peur et sans reproche*.[14] One must be especially wary of drawing any "progressive" conclusions for today about "socialist countries", or socialism in general, from his commitment at a time when "Left anti-Communism" was a powerful ideological force (and the Socialist International was still a hostile target of Communist *Agitprop* rather than a venue for a "dialogue" between Willy Brandt and Boris Ponomarev).

SIMON LEYS WRITES ABOUT Orwell's "socialism" as if it were a self-explanatory concept and its meaning self-evident. Yet this, as we know, is not exactly the case. Seen in historical perspective, there are only three ways of approaching the problem of Orwell's "socialism." One is to treat it as a belief in Utopia; but Orwell, a gritty commonsensical fellow, was not a Utopian. The second is to take the historical experience of the "socialist" (i.e. Communist) countries and analyse their institutional evolution—what it has been and might be. This is what Orwell did, 35 years ago, in *1984*.

The third approach is to bypass both the dream and the nightmare, to offer a realistic programme of social and institutional development. What kind of transformation of historic societies would satisfy certain ideals and socialist desiderata (including Orwell's own)? How would it deal with the problem that many such values may be incompatible in practice? Orwell might well have subscribed to Leszek Kolakowski's manifesto, "How to Be a Conservative-Liberal Socialist."[15]

In short, it is not enough to apply in the 1984 discussion of Orwell's "socialism" the old fallacy, nailed down by Sidney Hook, of "judging capitalism by its operations and socialism by its hopes and aspirations." For somebody like Orwell, with his common sense and *penchant* for the concrete, and his abhorrence of the loose use of words, it is only right and just to apply such standards to his own ideas, rather than take them out of historical context as if they had only a sentimental and not an intellectual content.

But that is just what Simon Leys does, as if to show that what appeared *desirable* (his italics) to Orwell at an early stage of his political evolution is to be decisive in the analysis of his relevance today. Leys writes:

> "Of course, no one could deny that Orwell's socialism presented a few paradoxes. He entirely ignored Marxist theory; he had total (and fully justified) contempt for a large part of the socialist intelligentsia; he cursed the communist experiment in its entirety; he believed that 'all revolutions are failures'. With all that, the fact that he persisted with such obstinacy in affirming that he was a 'socialist' may indeed appear somewhat disconcerting. . . . Actually, he wanted to rediscover what he considered the fundamental values of socialism—the ideal of 'justice and liberty' that was being 'buried beneath layer after layer of doctrinaire priggishness, party squabbles and half-baked "progressivism" until it is like a diamond hidden under a mountain of dung. The job of the Socialist is to get it out again.' "

If this is what Orwell thought (at one or another stage of his political development), still Simon Leys loyally admits that

> "In all other respects, he entertained no illusions: 'Collectivism leads to concentration camps, leader worship and war. There is no way out of this unless a planned economy can be somehow combined with the freedom of the intellect, which can only happen if the concept of right and wrong is restored to politics.' He perceived clearly that a centralised economy could become a grave menace for individual freedom and that, in this situation 'the State may come to mean no more than a self-elected political party, and oligarchy and privilege can return, based on power rather than on money'."

LEYS MAINTAINS THAT "the interpretation according to which Orwell's political stand would have drastically shifted had he lived long enough does not withstand analysis" because "in the realm of *principles* his convictions never wavered." He admits that Orwell changed, for instance, his belief that "it would be pointless to try resisting Fascism without first achieving a socialist revolution"—he "effectively ceased to believe in the imminent *possibility* of such revolutionary upheavals." But he argues (a shade ambivalently in my view) that "there is nothing in his writings that would allow us to conclude that he actually ceased to consider these *desirable*."

Does all this mean that while Orwell did not believe in "Utopia", he would not give up his belief in "Revolution"? Here it comes—

> ". . . when a political movement that dissociates the cause of liberty from that of justice, now attempts to press-gang his dead body into its ranks, the abuse seems enormous. Orwell always faced his enemies with much equanimity; one wonders, however, if he could have kept his cool, had he been confronted with his latter-day admirers."

Unlike Raymond Williams, Leys does give a specific reference:

> "An outrageous example of this kind of manipulation can be provided by a recent article by N. Podhoretz."

The article in question, "If Orwell Were Alive Today", was published in the American monthly, *Harpers* (January 1983). Its author, Norman Podhoretz (the editor of *Commentary*),

[14] For a sceptical view of Orwell, see Herb Greer's sharp analysis, "Orwell in Perspective", *Commentary* (March 1983).

[15] Leszek Kolakowski, "How to Be a Conservative-Liberal Socialist", ENCOUNTER, October 1978.

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made many points similar to my own. He went on to say:

> "Despite Crick's sophistical protestations, there can be no doubt that Orwell did belong in 'the camp of the Cold War' while he was still alive. Nor can there be much doubt that if he were alive today he would have felt a greater kinship with the neo-conservatives who are calling for resistance to Soviet imperialism than with either the socialist supporters of *détente* or the coalition of neutralists and pacifists who dominate the 'peace movement' in Europe and their neo-isolationist allies in the United States. . . ."

Podhoretz does not actually assert that Orwell would have become a neo-conservative—only that if he were alive today "he would be taking his stand with the neo-conservatives and against the Left" in the context of the post-War struggle between totalitarianism and democracy, the struggle he fought earlier on. Podhoretz admits, however, that he is not certain about Orwell's "socialism", as "there is no way of knowing whether and to what extent he would have changed his views in response to a changing world" in spite of Orwell's pride in his "power of facing unpleasant facts."

ORWELL IN HIS LIFETIME underwent a political evolution from "Tory anarchist" to revolutionary militant who then turned libertarian-democrat-socialist. Would he today be a neo-conservative or a social-democrat? This is not, I feel, as significant as what his attitude would have been towards the international conflict which he faced unequivocally. About that there can indeed be little doubt.

There is nothing, in my view, "outrageous" or "manipulatory" about Podhoretz's article. One may or may not agree with its thesis, but it is a reasoned argument; and Simon Leys himself has "lost his cool" by describing it in these terms without providing specific evidence for such harsh and summary dismissal. A certain special ideological animus perhaps accounts for it. The incongruity of his position can be seen in his mournful comment on

> "the persisting stupidity of the progressives, who, instead of applying themselves at last to reading and understanding [Orwell], are allowing the enemy to confiscate their best writer."

I am afraid that the scourge of the Maoist revolutionaries is showing here the same naivety as the scourge of the progressive intelligentsia did in his alibi for *Tribune*. How long might Simon Leys have to wait before his appeal for the "progressives" to genuinely outdo the "enemy" on Orwell is answered? Orwell died too early to see the outcome of such naive and confused hopes. What has happened since is that the Left became frightened at its move to "the Centre" and retreated to its threadbare illusions about making "fundamental changes" to a bourgeois-capitalist society (rather than consolidating all forces in free societies in the face of a threatening totalitarian system). Simon Leys can still face the difficult and disagreeable issues squarely. He has shown in China, as no one else did, an Orwellian "power of facing unpleasant facts."

9. *Body Language*

ARE THESE battles about Orwell merely about "body-snatching"? Not at all, they are really about the historical significance of politics in our epoch: and for this, Orwell dead is as relevant as Orwell alive. His emasculators seem to feel that "he who possesses Orwell possesses the future." They merely demonstrate that he who misunderstands the past misunderstands the present.

Orwell once referred to a "generation of unteachables who hang around us like a necklace of corpses." One would have thought that a number of myths believed by "progressives" would have been abandoned by now, when most human links in Orwell's "necklace of corpses" are literally dead. But it is not whole generations which are unteachable, but a section of the intelligentsia in each generation. Their present treatment of Orwell is only one example of their mythopoeic frame of mind.

Another is the perpetuation of old myths among the children—and grandchildren—of Orwell's generation of "progressives." They wanted so much at the time to believe in the guilt of the accused in the Moscow Trials; but they hotly defended the thesis of the innocence of Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs. After Khrushchev's "secret speech" it is no longer possible to perpetuate the first myth, but that, as it happens, is only an additional motive for perpetuating the second. "Innocence" persists, in spite of all the Philbys and Blunts, and all the comprehensive evidence sifted and analysed by the authors of historical books on the two cases—*Perjury* by Alan Weinstein and *The Rosenberg File* by Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton. These authors were not "anti-Communists." Weinstein was a "progressive" when he began his book, Radosh and Milton probably still are. To perpetuate the myths of the innocence of Hiss and of the Rosenbergs may not make much sense in terms of argument and logic; but it does make it easier, psychologically, to preserve a certain kind of political faith.

We have here again the familiar mechanism of symmetrism: Stalin was certainly evil (nobody can deny that he got rid of a number of innocent people; but then so did the Americans). As against "the Great Terror" (Robert Conquest) in the USSR under Stalin, there was "the Great Fear" (David Caute) in the USA under Joseph McCarthy; Bukharin was innocent, but then so was Hiss. There were, perhaps, some differences in scale and even, possibly, in character between the Soviet deportation of nationalities and the American war-time internment of the *Nisei*, just as there might be no exact parallel between the fate of the scores of millions of Gulag victims and the fate of Miss Lillian Hellman and "the Hollywood Ten." But is it all not similar "in principle"?

GIVEN THIS PSYCHOLOGICAL PREDISPOSITION, contemporary "progressives" show little inclination to ask themselves difficult questions. They concentrate their

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energy on American misdemeanours to improve the balance; they try desperately, for instance, to rehabilitate Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs.[16] The result is the perpetuation of myths which should have died long ago. It is the attitude behind such myths which provides the motives for the present operation on Orwell.

CONSIDER THIS RECENT EPISODE in *The Guardian*.[17] It published on 17 December 1983 an article by R. W. Johnson, "007: Licence to Kill." The author, an Oxford don, developed a conspiracy theory for the shooting down of the Korean airliner. He put the blame for it on the Americans. This fantasy was promptly reproduced in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (18 January) and summarised in detail by *Trybuna Ludu* (13 January). It was criticised by Professor R. V. Jones (*The Guardian*, 20 January), who referred to Johnson's assertion that in 1940 "Churchill had had foreknowledge of which cities were to be attacked by *Luftwaffe* and had deliberately withheld such information from Fighter Command." Professor Jones—a scientist and as author of *Most Secret War* (1978) the authority on the subject—characterised this as "a monstrous travesty of fact." He concluded that "Mr Johnson's readiness to misrepresent the fact in this instance is so blatant that it disqualifies him as an analyst of such an international tragedy as the Korean airliner." In his rejoinder, "KAL 007 conspiracy theory that shouldn't be sidetracked" (*The Guardian*, 25 January), R. W. Johnson lamely replied by expressing his hope that Professor Jones "will not persist in jumping from the scarcely connected facts of the Coventry raid to the confident assertion that all was just as the US told us it was in the case of the KAL tragedy. . . ."

Such flights of ideological fancy would not be worth mentioning except for the fact that they illustrate the persistence of myth-making tendencies in the present-day Left. The political attitude behind it is not all that different from the hatred of the West which motivated their "progressive" forefathers. R. W. Johnson, in his article "Churchill Airstrip" (*New Society*, 19 January), writes:

> "Less than three weeks into 1984, most of us are already terminally bored by discussions of whether the age of Big Brother has/will/might arrive. This is a pity. If you think about it, Big Brother was just a personalised flourish at the summit of the society Orwell envisaged. The far more fundamental fact was the division of the world into three great competing blocs, Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia."

According to Johnson, Churchill not only cold-bloodedly sacrificed Coventry, but his foolishly-based foreign policy rested on a fundamental error:

> "The problem which all British governments have had since 1945 was that Churchill's grand design was wrong, indeed a disaster—but that it had been legitimated forever by the quixotic triumph of 1940. Accordingly they have tried to sidle away from the Churchill heritage obliquely, without facing up to the need to deal with that heritage in the same way that the Russians needed to confront the legacy of stalinism with a positive campaign of de-stalinisation. For Britain's future now clearly lies with Eurasia, not with Oceania."

For Johnson, Britain's future now clearly lies with the East not with the West. It is this which explains Mr Johnson's myth-making about the Korean airliner and the anti-Americanism of his conspiracy theory (though it does not excuse the waywardness of his "de-stalinisation" reference). But why drag the anti-Soviet Orwell into a pro-Soviet argument?

WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR the strange mixture? How is it—why should it be—that attitudes directly contrary to Orwell's own on Soviet and Communist affairs are coupled with his ostensible endorsement by the new generation of "progressives"? The answer seems to lie in the contemporary history of the Left, and especially in the evolution of the New Left during the quarter-of-a-century since its inception. When it emerged after Khrushchev's 1956 speech and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution it was, under the impact of these two shocks, at its most critical about Soviet actions. (That is why Raymond Williams could write that it respected Orwell "*especially* in its early years.") But gradually the New Left shifted its position. It moved from its early "anti-Stalinist" stance to an attitude which is not antagonistic to, or is helpful to, Soviet policies. The conservative enemy at home, not the totalitarian enemy abroad, is the main enemy! The old "progressive" impulse slowly but surely reasserted itself, and resulted in an increasing obliteration of the original distinctions between the Old and New Left. This political evolution could be observed from the time of the *Universities and Left Review* to the present, when its successor, *New Left Review*, exhibits how the old *Newspeak* of the Old Left has merged with the new *Newspeak* of the New Left.[18]

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[16] When Hiss was interviewed on BBC TV his innocence was taken for granted: he was treated as a victim of a self-evident frame-up. The case of the Rosenbergs is still considered "controversial." It constantly crops up in the correspondence columns of various magazines (e.g. *The Spectator* in England, *The Nation* in the USA). Hardly a year has gone by without a new book, TV programme, film, or play on Hiss or the Rosenbergs. For instance, reviewing one such attempted "rehabilitation"—the film *Daniel*—in *The Times* (13 January 1984), David Robinson wrote with a snappiness that defied a thousand years of jurisprudence:

> "The probability now seems to be that they were innocent, but that is hardly relevant."

The statement that the question of guilt in atomic spying "is hardly relevant" is staggering. Robinson also mentioned the Barbican retrospective, "Thoughtcrimes", which "is designed to show the need for vigilance in warding off the nightmares like Orwell's *1984* or McCarthy's 1950. . . ."

[17] Just how far the present *Guardian* has strayed from the tradition of the old *Manchester Guardian* has been documented by Peter Deli, "The *Manchester Guardian* and the Soviet Purges 1936–38", *Survey* (Spring 1984). Its current symmetrism—possible only if real and fundamental distinctions get blurred by calling them "irrelevant" or "immaterial"—is constantly manifested: "Whether George Orwell had set *1984* in the Soviet Union, the USA or Ruritania, is immaterial; what matters is his prediction of the progressive loss of civil liberties, the centralisation of power and the increasing ability of this power to manipulate" (Martin Ryle in *The Guardian*, 23 April 1984).

[18] See my article, "Of Myths and Horrors" (ENCOUNTER, February 1980).

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THE ADAPTATION OF *Newspeak* to current realities also goes on in the Soviet Union and other Communist countries. The necessity of "conquering the language" has been a continuous consideration ever since Lenin expressed the idea. At present Soviet linguists have been given the task of preparing a monumental "Leninist Dictionary" which is supposed to provide an authoritative interpretation of the philological legacy of the Soviet founding father. The editor of this "Dictionary", Pyotr Denisov of the Soviet Academy of Science, explained:

> "Lenin was a great innovator not only in politics but also in linguistics. . . . The Leninist word had a beneficial influence on the language of Soviet publications and official documents. . . . The writings of Lenin are in many respects the culmination of the development of the classical Russian language of the 19th century associated with the flourishing of Russian *belles lettres*, materialist philosophy and political publications. Lenin's writings begin the new—Soviet—phase."

Denisov provided some information about the "Dictionary" in an interview given to Edward Krustkaln from the Novosti press agency (*Trybuna Ludu*, 4 May 1984):

> "The work on the index has demonstrated again the wealth of Lenin's language. For instance, Lenin used 12,000 words only once, while the overall number of words used by him amounts to 37,500. I would like to add by way of a comparison that Shakespeare used only 15,000 words, Cervantes and Pushkin—about 20,000."

Almost every word used by Lenin in the fifth edition of his *Collected Works* (over 50 volumes) will have a special entry in the five volumes of the new "Dictionary." The publication of the first volume is scheduled for 1984. Clearly the enterprise "overtakes and surpasses" even the Orwellian imagination.

In the fatherland of Czeslaw Milosz no such monumental works are planned, but Milosz's classic "Murti-bing" is being brushed up in the Poland of General Jaruzelski. The official *Trybuna Ludu* now regularly runs a special column entitled *Words We Are Using*. Polishing up the old vocabulary, it offers a new *duckspeak* for "the masses" whose semantic sensitivities have, after all, been profoundly affected by the *Solidarity* era. In order to restore some credibility and lustre to the old *Newspeak*, it gives seemingly rational definitions for such concepts as "Socialism . . . Imperialism . . . Liberalism . . . Conservatism . . . Anarchism . . . Dialectics", etc. This last concept is described (*Trybuna Ludu*, 21–22 January 1984) as providing "the ground for a better understanding and explanation of reality." A better, neo-Orwellian definition might be that it represents the phenomenon of double-talk rationalising "Doublethink."

An entry on "Democracy" (*Trybuna Ludu*, 14–15 April 1984) is a good example of these attempts to make *Newspeak* "viable" again: "The contemporary bourgeoisie reduces democracy to the general right to vote for politicians." By contrast: "the provision of real political and economic power for the people is the fundamental purpose of the socialist revolution." The benefits of "socialist democracy" are the superior fruits of "really existing socialism", while the choices offered in Western countries are a contemptible substitute for genuine people's power.

An even more striking example was provided in *Words We Are Using*, in an entry on "Totalitarianism" (a word which *Trybuna Ludu* does not normally use) which claimed that:

> "In the '30s and '40s the concept had—rightly—an unambiguous meaning: it became a synonym for state terror, fascist genocide, and the violation of human rights. In the '50s, however, the concept began a new career. In the period of Cold War the experts on anti-Communist propaganda began applying the term to socialist countries. . . . For 30 years, the whole powerful machinery of Western propaganda has been used to identify the concept with really-existing-socialism."

The column, nicely combining "dialectics" with historical falsification, went on to say that this was a "distorting picture" and that it is the USA which was founded through the employment of totalitarian methods, methods which are used in its various genocidal client states.

The fact that the column was published on April Fool's Day, 1984, is probably of no dialectical significance.

ONE FURTHER WESTERN EXAMPLE, the last and, perhaps, the least. In some respects, young Christopher Hitchens is not quite representative of the New Left's evolution; nevertheless he reflects it, both in its "progressive" regression and in its contradictoriness about Orwell.

In his early "Trotskyist" period, at the beginning of his journalistic career, Christopher Hitchens was very censorious about things Soviet (that hopelessly degenerated "workers' state", that monstrously bureaucratic collectivism, etc.)—conspicuously more so than other members of the New Left. In his more recent writings one can detect an increasing ambiguity in his attitudes to pro- and anti-Soviet writings. Take, for example, his review in the *New Statesman* (22 May 1981) of the book *Cockburn Sums Up* (Quartet, 1981), by the late (and, to the end unreconstructed) Stalinist Claud Cockburn, who was an ingenious representative of Soviet viewpoints in the 1930s (in the *Daily Worker* and in *The Week*,[19] the influential disinformation bulletin which he produced). Hitchens considered him something of a father figure in spite of his having been a "rank Stalinist" who remained "proud of having told lies for his propaganda causes." Although, as Hitchens tells us, he had "some vicious arguments" with him "about Spain, Orwell, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact", etc., he considered him "a great journalist" who reminded him "of Orwell's description of Dickens—a man generously angry. . . ." His generous anger, like that of Wilfred Burchett, was somewhat narrowly selective. It did not include Communist atrocities; and we know what Orwell thought of the Cockburns in the 1930s. The incongruity of Hitchens' enthusiasm both for the apostle of intellectual integrity and for the cynical liar who even in the 1970s continued to produce reminiscences which were still full

[19] See Donald Watt, "The Week That Was", ENCOUNTER, May 1972.

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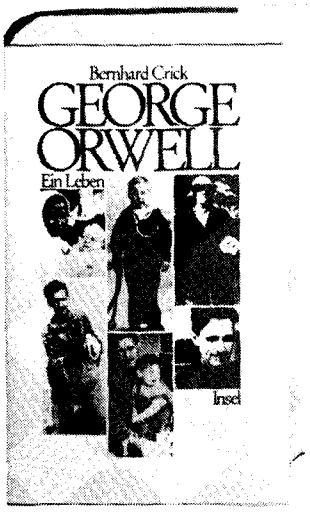
of palpable fabrications tells us volumes about Hitchens' ambivalences. The juxtaposition of the two figures—Orwell and Cockburn, the opponent and the supporter of the Moscow trials, both of whom he described as "Dreyfusards"—tells us something about Hitchens' deficient perception of Orwellian values.

All this fatuity becomes understandable in the light of what I have referred to as the recidivism of the New Left. What the experience of the 1930s taught the then "progressive" poet W. H. Auden, later found expression in his celebrated reference to it as a "low, dishonest decade." But Hitchens—in his thrillingly vicarious, if belated, adolescent excitement—describes them as "the stirring Thirties", a remark which may offer a clue to the psychological sources of his political muddle. Whom will it surprise that in a polemic with Norman Podhoretz (*Harpers*, February 1983), he tried to rescue Orwell from the reactionary clutches of this neo-conservative monster? Or that in his friendly review of Bernard Crick's biography of Orwell (*New Statesman*, 28 November 1980), Hitchens declared that "its chief strength lies in its thoroughness and its honesty"? (It may only be a case of one left hand washing the other.)

10. Eggs, Omelettes, & Good Cheer



BERNARD CRICK, to crown his Orwellian labours, has just produced a new edition of *1984* with his own introduction and annotations (Clarendon Press Oxford). It is quite beyond my critical powers to describe the triviality of its textual analysis, the meandering obfuscations of its arguments, and the pedantic tedium of its Lit. Crit.-cum-political science style. When Nigel Dennis cracked that Crick's writing on the late George Orwell was "a fate worse than death", he had not then read Crick's new introduction to *1984*. It is difficult to imagine that anyone who has read all 136 pages of it (154 with annotations) will have enough stamina left to read the novel itself.

In Crick's introduction Orwell becomes a convenient ventriloquist's dummy. The squeaking message is simple: the novel is just a satire. The "Seven Satiric Thrusts"—Crick's *summa* of the novel—are a mélange of the obvious and the flat, at the border of the ridiculous. Like a long explanatory footnote to a joke, they most surely deprive the reader of any joy in savouring the novel or understanding its significance. Needless to say, there is also the obsessive standard reference to "body-snatching" and inconsequential sophistries about Orwell's critique of the Left:

> "He was expert in the art of rubbing his own cat's fur backwards and he enjoyed doing just that. Not to be explicitly socialist is not the same as being implicitly anti-socialist, as body-snatchers for neo-Conservatism now argue. . . ."

The text was described in *The Observer* (25 March 1984) by Conor Cruise O'Brien as "a classical example of misplaced and excessive ingenuity, obfuscating the text it is intended to illuminate."

Somehow, for Crick, *1984* is intended not only to "warn" and to "rally", but also to "cheer us up." To assist the cheerfulness, he even manages to give it almost a happy ending:

> "The real ending of the book is not on the note of sado-masochistic horror of the scene in room 101; nor on the picture of a gin-soaked, broken man loving an imaginary leader, but on the words 'so late a date as 2050'. That is the date for the final translation of everything into Newspeak. What has held it up so long, we are authoritatively told by *The Times*, is 'the difficulty' (i.e. the impossibility) of translating writers like 'Shakespeare, Swift, Byron, Dickens.' May clear language and good literature sustain us."

So "the real ending" of *1984* is after all not so gloomy. We can remain cheerful. Professor Crick assures us that Orwell himself meant it so. For Crick, *1984* is a "satire" which is "harsh but good-humoured"—an echo of the blurb on its 1951 edition which first presented it under the obtuse description: "*A good-natured satire on dictatorship*."

The shallowness of so many comments on Orwell is perhaps best highlighted by the words of a Russian dissident. Natalya Hesse emigrated to the West, and she described her last meeting with the Sakharovs:

> "Between questions about the life of our dear ones—who has been arrested? whose homes have been searched?—we recalled Orwell, and I think this was not coincidental. We have lived to see the year predicted by Orwell—1984. And it may seem strange to a Western person, it may seem that Orwell has nothing to do with a real life, that this terrible utopia still remains a utopia or maybe an anti-utopia. However, the Soviet authorities—our dear *KGB*—have overtaken Orwell by four whole years. In 1980, Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov and Elena Georgievna Bonner were plunged into a world that surpassed Orwell's nightmarish fantasies . . ." (*The Times*, 9 April 1984, and *New York Review of Books*, 12 April 1984).

For the Sakharovs, cut off from the world and fighting for their lives, 1984 has indeed been a nightmare. The spectacle of Big Brother's deadly spite towards perhaps the greatest living Russian provides no occasion for Western good cheer. . . .

11. The Ideology of Rubbish

THE "ORWELLISATION" OF Orwell continues. The number of examples of rubbish I have inflicted on the reader are just a small portion of the proliferation of "Orwellian" folly occasioned by the advent of 1984. Who can follow it all? It is, alas, a part of a wider phenomenon involving the general political contami-

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nation of our cultural scene and of the *Newspeak* pollution of language. In all of this the traditional analytical distinctions between "Right" and "Left" are increasingly difficult to maintain. This seems only too obvious to those who write about the totalitarian experience they have personally undergone. A recent Polish exile in Paris, Kazimierz Brandys, reiterates in *Le Monde* (26 March 1984):

> "The writer who arrives [in Western Europe] from Warsaw, Prague, or Budapest . . . is struck by the absence of new ideas. The ideological divisions between Right and Left seem to him to have been overtaken by the experience of his country. He had got used to dividing countries between democratic and totalitarian ones."

This, however, the contemporary Western Left is reluctant to accept. Why? Doubtless during this period the influence of "progressives" on the evolution of the Left has been growing. This can be seen in the evolution of the parties and organisations of "the Left" in the West. In the United States the Democratic Party shifted from Truman, Kennedy and Johnson to Edward Kennedy, Walter Mondale, and Gary Hart (and the "Americans for Democratic Action" shifted from anti-Communism to McGovernism). In Britain the Labour Party moved from Attlee and Gaitskell to Foot and Kinnock (while the secession of the SDP weakened its moderate wing). In Germany the Social Democratic Party shifted from Kurt Schumacher and Ernst Reuter to Brandt and Vogel; in Sweden Erlander was replaced by Palme; in Greece there was the rise of *Pasok* and Papandreou.

In other Western countries, like France and Italy, the shift was not so pronounced; but everywhere there was a new polarisation reflected in the labels differentiating "socialists" and "social democrats." The Socialist International itself evolved from an organisation of an anti-Communist Left (under Braunthal and de Broûckere) to an anti-anti-Communist one which, under Brandt and Palme, came close to neutralism. The marked change in the climate of opinion on the Left found its expression not only in the emergence of the so-called "Hard Left" (in Britain, Tony Benn; in France, Jean-Pierre Chevènement), but also in the opportunistic behaviour of such Right-wing Labour politicians with formerly strong anti-Communist credentials as Denis Healey and Roy Hattersley.

WOULD ORWELL BE ABLE TO recognise the Labour Party he once supported? It is now officially committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament. Would he recognise the *Tribune* group which while he was alive still supported, however reluctantly, British membership of NATO?

Was Orwell a "pre-nuclear" visionary? Clearly one new ideological event has occurred: the splitting of the atom has led to the splitting of the "progressive" soul. Some are now more concerned with the vision of the Apocalypse (the end is near) than with the vision of Utopia (paradise is near). Others, like Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson, try to combine the two; it is a position logically more appropriate for good Christians than for good Marxists.

In the Soviet Union the post-Khrushchev leaders abandoned the Utopian perspective of the Third Party Programme of 1961 (which proclaimed that Communism would be achieved by 1980) and codified the new ideological line in the formula of "*really-existing-socialism*", i.e. the consecration of the internal *status quo*, and the relegation of the classless Utopia to an ever more distant future. That freezing of Utopia also entails a freeze on dialectics: no new theoretical propositions are offered.

In the West the ideological bankruptcy of the Communist movement is matched by the ideological sterility of the "progressives." In all their theoretical dissertations and debates there are no specific proposals as to how the socialist society is, at long last, supposed to work in terms of political organisation and economic planning, motives and incentives, distribution and limitations of power, the role of the free or "liberated" individual and of the market. The debates between the "theoreticians" of the New Left are even more vague and abstract than those of their ancestors. The current, very abstract discussions among "progressives", which at the moment divide "Socialists" from "Coalitionists",[20] are entirely devoted to strategy and tactics in "the struggle for power." One can still find Williams tirelessly repeating the monotonous petition for the Left "to develop contemporary (including new) analyses and policies" (*The Guardian*, 20 February 1984)—without himself, of course, offering any such original insights.

In France, the Communists and the Left socialists from CERES vote for Mitterrand in the Chamber of Deputies and criticise him outside it, while the former *gauchiste* professor of sociology Alain Touraine declares that "the essential merit of the government of the Left is to have relieved us of the embarrassment of the socialist ideology."

Thus, the old theories of "socialist transformation" are no longer usable, and no new ideas are available. The "Soviet model" (with its political oppression and Stalinist rigidities of planning) is no longer attractive. The Yugoslav model (with its "market socialism") is in economic trouble; its "workers' self-management" is increasingly seen as an empty ideological alibi, for in practice it does not at all mean "Workers' Control" of the Western progressive dream. What remains is the allure of power for the activists, who use ideological rationalisations for their "idealistic" motives. In a new "socialist" society Arthur Scargill may well drive a Rolls-Royce instead of a mere Jaguar, but miners will not have the right to strike.

WHAT THEN IS THE MEANING of "socialism" for those who reject the "really existing" models? If there is no clear answer to this question in 1984, how can one talk about Orwell's "socialism" in the context of 1984 as if it were a proposition which had real meaning? There is no doubt, as everyone admits, that he did consider himself a "socialist" and "a man of the Left." But it is difficult to imagine what these labels would mean to Orwell in the present, now that they have become even more hazy (even in his own time he was unclear about them).

In his article on "Catastrophic Gradualism" (1945) he

[20] See, in particular, Eric Hobsbawm in *Marxism Today* (March 1983) and Raymond Williams in *New Socialist* (March/April 1983).

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rejected the definition of socialism as "common ownership of the means of production" as leading to "centralised control" and "a new form of oligarchy." He also condemned "catastrophic gradualism" as the standard justification for "progressive" terror ("you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs") and went on to attack Kingsley Martin for using it:

> "Stalin, he admitted, had done terrible things, but on balance he had served the cause of 'progress' and a few million 'liquidations' cannot obscure this fact."

To the question of "Yes, but where is the omelette?", Orwell wrote, the answer "is likely to be: 'Oh well, you can't expect everything to happen all in a moment.' "

12. *The Transvaluation of Values*

FORTY YEARS HAVE passed and it is no longer a question of "a moment", but of an epochal experience. Orwell in 1984 would have to ask himself, therefore, whether his point of reference (in another passage about Socialism, in the same essay) was sufficient: "In the name of Socialism the Russian régime has committed almost every crime that can be imagined, but at the same time its evolution is away from Socialism, unless one redefines that word in terms that no Socialist of 1917 would have accepted." But in 1984, surely, a "1917" definition of socialism which does not take into account the experience of two-thirds of the century would seem woefully inadequate.

Orwell was at the time still satisfied with the easy formula about the need to combine "planning with freedom." But there were some seeds of doubt in his mind about it, as his review (*The Observer*, 9 April 1944) of F. A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* indicates. Although he criticised its propositions, he also wrote:

> "In the negative part of Professor Hayek's thesis there is a great deal of truth. It cannot be said too often—at any rate, it is not being said nearly often enough—that collectivism is not inherently democratic, but, on the contrary, gives to a tyrannical minority such powers as the Spanish Inquisitors never dreamed of."

Nor, of course, did the author of *Animal Farm* have any illusions about widening privileges in a Soviet-type society. But he did move from the "Revolution Betrayed" type of perception implied by *Animal Farm* (and by the reference to the 1917 Socialists) to a more sophisticated argument in *1984*—where it is not just a question of a privileged new ruling class, but of a totalitarian organisation of society according to the needs of power, its exercise and its perpetuation.

> "The Party is not a class in the old sense of the word. . . . The older kind of Socialist, who had been trained to fight against something called 'class privilege', assumed that what is not hereditary cannot be permanent. He did not . . . pause to reflect that hereditary aristocracies have always been short-lived, whereas adoptive organisations such as the Catholic Church have sometimes lasted for hundreds or thousands of years."

Crick, who asserts that *1984* is "neither wholly nor obsessively concerned with a totalitarian future", has produced a characteristically confused account of Orwell's analysis of it:

> "Most previous writers on totalitarianism, including Orwell himself in essays, had stressed its revolutionary and restless character, its creation of societies in a perpetual state of mobilisation for change—what Trotsky had called (encouragingly) 'permanent revolution'. The general view was also that totalitarian parties in power would seek to enrol more members rather than less. Orwell, prompted by Burnham, sees that cold war and atomic stalemate could lead instead to 'stability', or rather a ghastly freezing of human aspiration and social change into a caste, not even a class, society. . . ."

This comment indicates that Crick (*a*) has still not grasped Orwell's meaning; (*b*) does not understand totalitarianism; (*c*) does not know what Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution" is specifically about. (It is, as every undergraduate Marxist knows, about the telescoping of "bourgeois" and "socialist" revolutions in backward countries, and not about the "creation of societies in a perpetual state of mobilisation for change.")

As for a programme of equality, promising "fair shares" for all and actually banishing economic inequalities:

> "Ingsoc, which grew out of the earlier Socialist movement and inherited its phraseology, has in fact carried out the main item in the Socialist programme; with the result, foreseen and intended beforehand, that economic inequality has been made permanent."

Crick's annotation to this disturbing passage is the bland apologetic assurance to the reader that "Orwell is not attacking socialism, but a simplistic version. . . ."

Orwell was also quite unambiguous about a certain naive purism so often invoked by disappointed "true believers." He approvingly paraphrased Arthur Koestler on this "notion that so-and-so has 'betrayed' . . . [which] is ever present in left-wing thought":

> "It is not merely that 'power corrupts'; so also do the ways of attaining power. Therefore all efforts to regenerate society *by violent means* lead to the cellars of the O.G.P.U., Lenin leads to Stalin, and would have come to resemble Stalin if he had happened to survive."
>
> (*Collected Essays*, Vol. 3, p. 278)

Similarly he made this trenchant comment on Trotsky:

> "Trosky, in exile, denounces the Russian dictatorship, but he is probably as much responsible for it as any man now

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living and there is no certainty that as a dictator he would be preferable to Stalin, though undoubtedly he has a much more interesting mind. The essential act is the rejection of democracy—that is, of the underlying values of democracy; once you have decided upon that, Stalin—or at any rate someone *like* Stalin—is already under way."

(*Collected Essays*, Vol. 1, p. 418)

ORWELL IS NOT the first (and one presumes not the last) major writer who has been subject to misrepresentation. But it is difficult to find a comparable case of ideological "reinterpretation" where the message of the author has undergone such a degree of distortion and corruption so soon—such a total reversal so early on.

The ideological need for it must be very great indeed because the process continues. Reviewing in *Tribune* (23 March 1984) the new edition of Raymond Williams' *Orwell*, Oliver Whitehead approves his thesis that:

> "Orwell actually moved to the Left as he developed politically, not, as is often supposed, in the other direction. The cold war warriors who claim Orwell for themselves are profoundly wrong. . . . 'In England', Orwell wrote towards the end of his life, 'the immediate enemies of truthfulness, and hence of freedom of thought, are the press lords, the film magnates and the bureaucrats' and it is this insight which shaped some of the most significant sections of *1984*."

And in "a collection of radical essays" entitled *Nineteen Eighty-Four in 1984* (Comedia), David Widgery busies himself with "reclaiming" Orwell "from the Cold War fanatics."

Faced with this whirligig of absurdity, one can only recall Orwell's remark that "to be corrupted by totalitarianism one does not have to live in a totalitarian country. The mere prevalence of certain ideas can spread a kind of poison. . . ." But surely Orwell would not have imagined that he himself would be adopted by the "progressives", and used to spread the poison.

LOOKING AT THE WHOLE STORY of Orwell between *1984* and 1984, one cannot help but feel a certain relief in reading a letter to the Editor of the *New Statesman* (6 January 1984) which honestly expresses, in Oldspeak, an old straightforward sentiment:

> "1984 is the year for socialists to consign Orwell to the dustbin of history."

Alas, this is unlikely to happen. The "progressives" may well explore still other possibilities of "Orwellian transvaluation." What, for instance, should prevent them from "Orwellising" *Darkness at Noon*, now that Arthur Koestler is safely dead? The "Cold Warriors" could again be accused of "body-snatching." One could almost hear the argument that what Koestler really had in mind was "Midnight in Manhattan"—Rubashov being modelled on Rosenberg, and Gletkin on Judge Irving Kaufman. . . .

In a recent book (*Headbirths, or the Germans Are Dying Out*) Günter Grass raised the question: "How will Sisyphus react to Orwell's decade?" The answer is now obvious. Judging by this mid-year history of Orwell in 1984, it will be the same old Sisyphean story all over again.

IT IS A DISPIRITING SPECTACLE to see so many of our Western contemporaries (who enjoy freedom) wailing that Orwell predicted their present terrible enslavement. Yet we can take heart at the stirring efforts of so many libertarian dissidents (who are actually enslaved) as they turn to the message of a writer who offers them the spiritual weapons of clarity and integrity. George Orwell will survive 1984.

Newsflash

The sole gone cold and pushed across the plate,
The white wine in the glass she did not want,
The emerald parsley, frail and intricate,
The close walls of the dismal restaurant;
The fade across the tablecloth, the heat
From three bad candles swollen in the gloom,
The separating shadows that compete
With unlit flesh and bone for elbow-room,

And then the flash, a wave across the wall,
The gasp of wickerwork, the split tureen,
The dust-filled and the clockless interval
Around each jagged, forensic smithereen:
The keepsake photograph, just inches tall,
Blown up and reassembled on the screen.

John Levett

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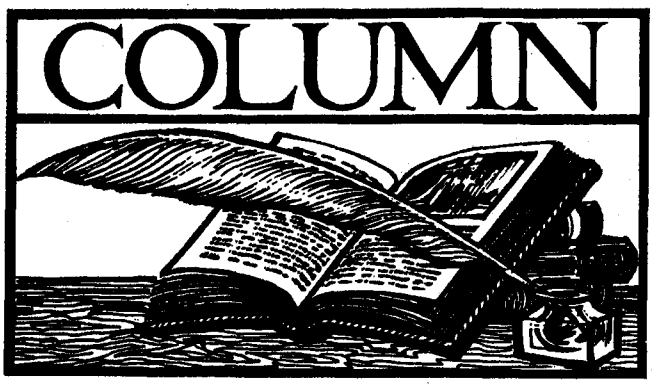

SLOANE-RANGERISH English friends of mine—head-scarves, hacking jackets, green Wellingtons, and freeze-dried accents—are always off to what they call "the countreh." Their French counterparts spend weekends in "*mon pays*" or "*mon village*", site of their *résidence secondaire*. Belgians have *fermettes*; one Dutch family I know used to share an island lighthouse; many Germans have part-time farms. Even Washingtonians maintain rustic cabins outside Annapolis, on the sheltered, shoal-filled creeks of Chesapeake Bay.

What is it we're all after? (Yes: I'm no exception to the bucolic rule.) Clean air—at the cost of hours on a smelly road? Quiet—despite a deafening dawn chorus? Leisure—although the telephone still finds us? Timelessness—against the looming deadline for starting back? Part of the attraction is obviously change: mild discomfort, some physical labour, mud on our boots, withered vegetables from the village grocer, damp sheets, stiff shabby garments, a slight smell of mould. After the centrally-heated life, all these have their chastening charm. Country neighbours, too, are equivocally refreshing, absorbed by local concerns, indifferent to the twittering metropolis. "Nature" is a further magnet: the chance to see foxes or roe deer, moles or hedgehogs, wagtails or herons, juniper bushes or bog myrtle. So far, so fetching: but if this were all, would so many town-dwellers brave the super-highway on Friday night and early Monday morning? I doubt it. Somewhere in the pastoral package there must be a deeper *idée-force*.

Perhaps it's the appeal of the past. Townspeople, a touch patronising, sometimes see the country as a kind of museum. The tourist industry helps. In "my" particular village, there are now sometimes Morris dancers, and a sharp local operator runs a "stage coach" for the summer visitors, with no stages but a hefty toll. For some of the bored, bemused souls drifting round in the mild West-country drizzle, the whole experience may be a nostalgic dream punctuated by cream teas. Ignore the tractors and combine harvesters, forget the Forestry Commission and its conifer regiments, close your nostrils to the pig slurry and your ears to the milking-machines. Look instead at the cottage gardens, the dry-stone walls, and the sheep-shearing competition at the annual show. On holiday, we all play at being Marie-Antoinette.

Ours, like hers, is a highly selective version of the rustic centuries. Arthritis, ploughman's stoop, infant mortality, plague, fire, flood, and famine—all are conveniently banished. What we seek and cherish is a notion of rusticity only partly derived from poetic models in the ancient world. Its true heyday was the Romantic Movement, when heavy industry was making the towns still more hellish, and blackening fields and skies with soot and smoke. Against that rasping new reality, an idealised countryside upheld the hope of harmony and peace.

It still does. Climbing stiffly from the driver's seat at the end of the field track leading to the family property, one stumps about like an astronaut trying to feel his feet. Gradually, normality returns: eyes forget the ribboning highway; the heartbeat decelerates; neck and shoulders relax. Fooled by physiology, one blesses the *genius loci*. What a relief to be here! Unpacking, one potters about the familiar nooks and crannies, noting small jobs to be done, looking forward to time in the workshop or the woodshed, glad to be facing finite, manual tasks. Lay the fires; stock the log basket; check the larder; collect milk and eggs from the farm. Order the local paper.

And that—you might have known it—is what dissipates the dream. "STATION CLOSURE ORDERS SERVED" . . . "TRADERS WAGE WAR ON YELLOW LINES" . . . "DUST WAR" . . . "HEALTH HAZARD" . . . "WALKERS UNDER FIRE" . . . "MAFIA SEEK DRUG THIEF." All genuine headlines from two consecutive issues. True, local journalists like to borrow Fleet Street bombast, jazz up parochial issues, dramatise quite equable disputes. But read the Letters column. "Twaddle"—"complacency"—"bigotry"—"corruption and hypocrisy"—"petty" and "behind the times": all these from only one issue. And what brings tempers most readily to the boil? Essentially, threats to the pastoral dream.

DON'T THINK I'm decrying it. No one who values wildlife and landscape could applaud some of the vandalism I've seen myself. Parties of schoolchildren have uprooted flowers at the doorsteps of cottages. Louts have smashed glasshouses and sliced up villagers' prize marrows. Walkers litter the hills with cola cans, cigarette packets, and assorted plastic bags. A local tenant farmer tips old cars and washing-machines into the stream below us; above, householders spice it with detergent. One new landowner recently razed a pretty hedgerow along the edge of a brook which still divides the fields and defies the tractor. Two of his neighbours have erected suburban fencing on the same country lane, while another has replaced an ancient "gravestone" wall with ephemeral sheep-netting. Elsewhere, while the planning authority forbids bed-and-breakfast signs, it permits water-skiing sheds to ruin a famous view.

Meanwhile, from the other side, some locals resent the urban country-lovers. Shopkeepers thrive on visitors, but their van-drivers battle with the traffic. Holiday cottages attract high spenders, but make homes expensive and scarce. Amenity societies oppose by-passes, and lorries go on thundering through village streets. To siphon off the tourists, planners create "honey-pots." They may prevent generalised despoliation; but they turn a few unfortunate beauty-spots into penny arcades.

National Parks are an effort to square the circle. Yet, even here, the same problems arise. All my examples, in fact, are from just such a privileged area—which one, wild Dartmoor ponies wouldn't make me divulge. The only solution, in the long run, is eternal vigilance, and willingness to engage in local

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politics. Neither, I think, is what we reluctant urbanites seek in our beloved countreh.

WHAT PROMPTED these thoughts was a recent visit to a former abbey outside Paris, now used partly as a conference centre. In the words of its publicity brochure, it "offers, in the calm and serenity of its guest-house, living and working conditions which are propitious for meditation. Its water, stone, and wood, and its well-shaded park, make it ideal for seminars involving creativity, organisation, or research. Everything there is still impregnated with the intellectual concentration of twenty generations of monks, scholars, architects, and artists." This, surely, is a distillation of what many people are looking for when they belt down the motorway.

And, to my surprise, I found it. The subject of our deliberations—the present crisis in the European Community—seemed very far from the tranquillity of our country retreat. We came from several countries in Western Europe, all with contrasting views on what was wrong and what needed to be done. We disagreed vigorously. I chaired one session, and was obliged to clamp gently down on long-winded colleagues and friends. But, frank and forceful as the debate was, it produced more agreement than dissension. Not—though I'd like to think it—through the occult influence of all those centuries of monks. Not because our gathering was a pious collection of superannuated "good Europeans": it wasn't. Not because the problems are simple: they aren't. What made the discussion so tough and constructive was the sense that Europe is running out of time.

That message is nothing new. An issue of *Newsweek* earlier this spring trumpeted Europe's decline with almost exultant despair. A Community 30 years old which still crawls and fumbles; a so-called "common market" still criss-crossed by non-tariff trade barriers; "political cooperation" which can't agree on a statement about Afghanistan; an economy in crisis, outdistanced in the new technologies; a European "Parliament" with precious little power; public opinion disappointed and increasingly indifferent; member governments quarrelling over net budget contributions—fiddling the books while the Treaty of Rome burns.

It's a hanging indictment, and in some respects a true bill. But, like most cases for the prosecution, it lumps together too many disparate elements. Europe's "crisis" is not one, but several. Some are intrinsic to the Community; some are general; one, at least, is not a "crisis" at all.

This last is the so-called "budget crisis." By the time you read these words, it may already have been solved. If not, within months it will be. Essentially, it hinges on how to prevent Britain—or any other country in future—paying an undue net share of the Community's costs. Since duties on imports from the rest of the world belong to the Community rather than to the country which collects them at its ports, and since Britain is still a big importer, she hands over large sums to the Community exchequer. Since farming is the only major policy on which Community spending has replaced national spending, and since Britain has very few farmers, she gets little back. This has made her one of the Community's net contributors, although she's also one of the poorer member States. Thanks to Mrs Thatcher's sometimes strident insistence, this is now generally recognised and deplored. All that remains is to calculate how much it can be remedied. At the time of writing, the gap between the rival positions was approximately £150 million. This, frankly, is the sort of sum over which civil servants should haggle—not Heads of State.

Still, until that's settled, Britain will not agree to expand the Community budget; and already it's beginning to feel the pinch. It won't "go bankrupt", as the newspapers like to say: it will continue to receive income at the present level. But to meet all its obligations—and above all to finance new policies—the Community needs more revenue. Only the haggling over £150 million stands in its way.

A mini-crisis, then: perhaps a pseudo-crisis, since it could so easily be solved. Far more serious are the deeper crises facing Europe—in technology, in demography, and in security. None of these is exclusive to the Community's member States. Each is a facet of a broader situation, partly outside Europe's control.

IN ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY, Europe has long been panting to catch up. Its main victorious competitors are the United States and Japan; but other countries are showing their paces too. Part of Europe's problem in the past was its propensity to invent but not to market: in R & D, it was better at R than at D. This in turn reflected the smallness of its national markets, and lack of large-scale public procurements in defence and space technology. With the "common market" still incomplete, with no common defence and little common space expenditure, and with government contracts still predominantly national, most of the old handicaps remain. What is new is the development of the microchip, and the ability of other nations, once backward, to exploit it to Europe's detriment.

This in turn points to the demographic problem. Europeans have long been outnumbered. However densely populated their small promontory of Asia, they have been a rich minority in a teeming, hungry world. That privileged position may last for years, or centuries: yet, as contrasts grow, it feels increasingly precarious. In recent years, moreover, Europe's population has been ageing. Now, it's beginning to shrink. In the long term, this means two things: first, that a smaller workforce will have to support a bigger load of unproductive senior citizens; and secondly, that Europe will become more vulnerable—not least in lacking manpower for conventional defence.

WHICH LEADS, OF COURSE, to the question of Europe's security. Here, a number of factors converge. The most obvious is the vast increase in Soviet military potential. The second is the climate of fear evinced and enhanced by the so-called "Peace Movement." The third is the uncertainty now evident in transatlantic relations. The fourth is the growing debate about "flexible" or "inflexible" response. The net result is to reopen, especially in France and Germany, the question of whether—within the Atlantic Alliance—Europe should seek greater unity in its own defence.

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THE QUESTIONS converge, but not all the arguments. A revived European Defence Community might save money, but would hardly in itself counterbalance increased Soviet power. It might appease a few peace campaigners whose chief concern is United States domination; but it would need to involve efforts at *détente*, and would be disastrous if it led to a reduction of US forces in Europe. Any such European effort, indeed, would have to be coordinated with the Pentagon and the White House. And if there were to be a European "second pillar" within the Alliance—the trendy suggestion in France is a revived WEU—it would be vital for its members to agree on strategic doctrine. At the moment, the French defence establishment is still cautiously picking its way back from Gaullist notions of "Fortress France"; but it has a long way to go before its thinking reassures the Germans. They are also understandably nervous about blithe proposals to "raise the nuclear threshold." On some interpretations, this could simply mean making Germany the new cockpit of Europe.

So the security debate remains incoherent. But new and fruitful policies are seldom born without confusion; and what strikes me most forcibly is how vigorously my continental friends and colleagues are beginning to seek ways forward. Many, but not all, involve developing the European Community—completing the "common market", encouraging joint ventures in new technology, improving political cooperation, strengthening the institutions and extending their remit—in the first instance, perhaps, to embrace joint procurements for defence.

Many of these ideas bristle with difficulty. Some will be repugnant to one or another government. But I don't think I'm wrong to detect in their discussion a new mood: of urgency, seriousness, even impatience. Europe has spent too long on relative trivialities. As we all make off this summer to our rustic dream-worlds, we might reflect that the peace we seek has got to be won by effort.

M

You Hear It Always

Time running aground on a sandbank
is not a ship with masts deferring to the wind
Questions cast ashore,
time running aground on a sandbank.

Perhaps here unexpected happiness begins.
Perhaps the present dissolves here
and loneliness abides. Perhaps this is the place
where thought quickens the water's current.

Wind is foretold, rain is foretold,
storms are foretold,
unforetold the tremor
of the stones around your house.

You measure the horizon,
round it off.
The roofs are heavy with broken weathercocks
and no one tells the wind the way to the sea.

That poem you heard once
about the pine and the isdarac tree
you hear it always

David Rokeah

translated from the Hebrew
by the author and Peter Porter

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Blake Morrison

Transfusion

It is as we had always suspected:
God exists. Our scientists detected
His brain-rhythms while testing off Jura
For a new kelp-scheme on the ocean-floor.
Those North Sea oil-rigs are a cover.
We are drilling into the earth's core
To draw out his energy and breath.
We shall harness him to the body. Death
May very soon be a thing of the past.
War, famine, disease—they will be banished.
The sparrowhawk will mate with the ringdove.
We shall enter that garden where love
And all eternity lie in wait. . . .

But for now God must stay our little secret.
Other nations cannot be trusted to
Accord him such reverence as we do.
Our own people, sad to say, are likewise
Unreliable. There would be chaos—
Rioting and looting in the street,
Panic at the thought of Him under their feet.
We must first construct a new theology
Giving greater prominence to geology.
The Cabinet, in short, was unanimous:
For the present God's restricted to us.

This is my reason for summoning you
Here—to be added to the Chosen Few.
The operation, for anyone in doubt,
Is really nothing to be concerned about.
There is a specially constructed bunker
For a process we call "aquapuncture"
Which releases God's spirit from a trapped nerve
And forces it upward through a large valve
Into pressure-cooled containers of juice.
By trepanning the skull we then infuse
You with the holiness of His brain.

There are, though, first some forms to fill in—
Life insurance cover, an IQ test,
Medical check-ups and all the rest
Of the usual but necessary irritations.
Please do your best to keep your patience,
And remember this: the lovely trance
Of what you will shortly experience
Will be eternal compensation. Are there
No questions? Then let us say this little prayer:

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Hymn

Oh, God, whose kingdom we tremble to come into,
Restore to wholeness our clapped-out bodies and minds.
Our eyes are heavy as leather purses,
Our brain-cells are feverish as a wasps' nest,
Our hearts are massing with cholesterol choirs,
Our blood clogs the gutter of every continent,
And we are full of piss and wind.

Oh, God, we see at last how unseeing we have been:
Your fingerprints are whorls in the seabed,
Your nails the glacial mountain lakes,
Your knuckles the peaks on an ordnance survey,
Your buttocks the cleft of all-knowing,
Your teeth just the tip of an iceberg,
Your pores the space between clouds.

Oh, God, forgive us for not reaching you earlier,
Whose hair is the corn-glow of the prairies,
Whose brow the curve of the earth,
Whose sweat the sheen on playing fields,
Whose breath the fog down the Pacific,
Whose mouth the chasm in the solar system,
Whose penis the miracle in the bush.

Oh, God, though we are worthless and ridiculous,
Let us drink the rainfall of your irises,
Let us lodge under your fingernails like sand-grains,
Let us eat out of your palm like gazelles,
Let us strap-hang in your nostrils like pollen,
Let us sit on your tongue like communion wafers,
Let us make our living in your heart.

And now, God, we can feel you seeping into us,
We can hear you singing in our veins,
Each tissue is restored like an oil-painting,
You surge in our arteries like a rip-tide,
Our lungs are bigger than the universe,
The old rhythms are changing, here is love
Like a volcano in the roof of our heads.

Oh, God, this is my transfusion,
I must keep you here forever,
I will surround myself with sentry-posts,
I will hug you to my bloodstream like a bantam,
I will kill any man who tries to take you away.
This is my possession. This is my religion.
This is the meaning of God.

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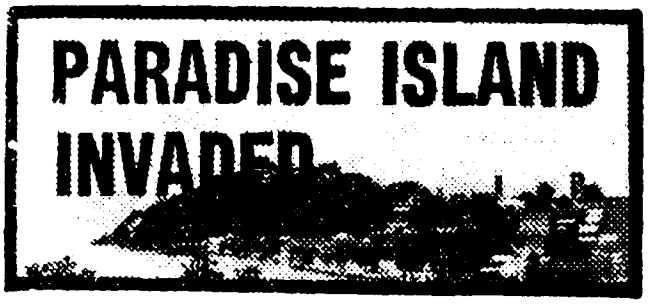
NOTES & TOPICS

International Commentary

Our Man in Grenada
The Tactics of Indifference

By Patrick Cosgrave



ON THE SORRY SPECTACLE presented recently by British diplomacy in the Caribbean, this is what the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee had to say:

> "There is no doubt that HM Government were aware, by Saturday 22 October at the latest and almost certainly the previous day, of the intentions of the OECS states, together with Barbados and Jamaica, to launch a military invasion of Grenada in cooperation with friendly states. There is also no doubt that by the evening of Saturday 22 October Ministers had been made aware of the personal wish of the Barbadian Prime Minister that Britain should make 'a contribution' to the operation. Yet the evidence given to us by the Foreign Secretary paints a picture of a British administration reacting passively to the events unfolding in the Caribbean and basing its reaction to those events entirely on the advice received from Washington, which in the event proved to be unreliable advice."

The MPs on the Committee had, of course, a great deal more to say on the subject of the October 1983 events,[1] and (according to Jeremy Taylor in *The Times* on 14 April 1984) their preferred word to describe the Foreign Office—"lethargic"—is replaced in the West Indies by much stronger formulations. In that way the glory won by the British military in the Falklands was tarnished, the intimacy with the United States which the Prime Minister so cherishes was weakened, and ineptitude was made manifest.

As it happens, I believe that the wishes of Mr Tom Adams (the Prime Minister of Barbados) and of his colleagues in the "Organisation of East Caribbean States" should have been acceded to, and that the United Kingdom should have taken part in the landings, in however modest a capacity. It is clear, however, that neither the Prime Minister nor Sir Geoffrey Howe share that view. (The Committee is ambiguous on the subject.) It is worth adding, however, that in my opinion the Prime Minister might have been persuaded to take a more positive attitude, had there been a bit more time, and had she been better briefed.

None the less, I am less concerned here with the rights and wrongs of the landing itself than with the evidence available on every hand of gross technical incompetence in the receiving, processing, and making use of information by the Foreign Office. The Foreign Secretary told the Committee that "there was certainly a hesitation to embark on telephone calls on necessarily an open line" to the Caribbean. But, as the Committee rightly comment on this reluctance:

> "This seems to us a somewhat lethargic approach. It indicates that HM Government was insufficiently attuned to the political feelings of Caribbean Commonwealth states, and to their sense of interdependence, and therefore poorly equipped to evaluate accurately the signals coming from the Caribbean Governments."

Detailed though the Committee's analysis and criticism is, it is incomplete without the dramatic evidence of Mr Winston Churchill. Sir Paul Scoon, the Governor-General of Grenada, told Mr Churchill that he saw the British Deputy High Commissioner in Barbados (Mr David Montgomery) on 23 October, and expressed grave unease about the situation in his country.

While it is true that Sir Paul did not, on this occasion, seek British military intervention he did fully express his worry. No sense of urgency ensued. More seriously, two days earlier (on 21 October), Mr Tom Adams saw the British High Commissioner in his country, Mr Giles Bullard. He *did* ask for British military aid—specifically, for the SAS, because "I thought it would be appropriate if Her Majesty's representative on the island were to be safeguarded by British forces." Apparently (according to the Committee) because this request was oral, no attention was paid to it in London. Mr Adams told Mr Churchill:

> "My sole regret is that I did not speak to Mrs Thatcher personally on the telephone."

The implication of Tom Adams's remark is surely terrifying. Whether it is right or wrong to suppose that Mrs Thatcher—on the evidence of her known character and her record in the Falklands—might have been persuaded to support intervention had local leaders been able to appeal to her directly we do not know. But it is clear that it is no longer possible for a

[1] *Second Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee. Session 1983–84. Grenada.* HMSO, £8.40.

PATRICK COSGRAVE, *Political Editor of "The Spectator" from 1971–75, was from 1975–79 Special Adviser to Mrs Thatcher. His biography of her, "A Tory and Her Party", published by Hutchinson in 1978, will be followed next year by a study of her first term in office, to be published by Bodley Head. "Adventure of State", his third novel, will be brought out by Ross Anderson this autumn.*

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Commonwealth Prime Minister to be sure that a message passed to Her Majesty's Government in London through the medium of British diplomats will get through, however urgent it is.

It was all too evident to any journalist who saw either the Foreign Secretary or the Prime Minister performing in the House of Commons immediately after the Grenada landings that they had been taken by surprise. It was evident, further, that they had not enjoyed the full confidence of President Reagan. In consequence of this latter revelation much mockery was levelled at the Treasury bench by the Opposition, and Ministers were clearly made uncomfortable. However, as the Foreign Secretary told the House[2] on 24 October he had had no definite information of an American intention to invade before the event itself. This, the Committee drily observes,

> "appears to have reflected both the information then available to HM Government and their assessment of the signals which had so far reached London of President Reagan's intentions. . . ."

Now, it is obviously a matter of regret for Conservative politicians that their government did not enjoy the full trust of the President of the United States, especially considering the fact that the Anglo-American axis has, from the moment of her election as leader of her party in 1975, been the crucial element in Mrs Thatcher's foreign policy. On the other hand, the evidence from Washington is that the State Department did not enjoy the full confidence of the White House either, Mr Reagan and his staff obviously fearing that "reservations" both in Foggy Bottom and in Whitehall would encourage leaks. Further, damaging though the revelation of the President's secretiveness was to the *amour propre* of British politicians, it can hardly be doubted that he was wise, certainly prudent, in his tactics. And, it seems to me at any rate, that the harm done to the Anglo-American alliance is far more the responsibility of a British government that failed to back an ally in the crunch, than it is of President Reagan.

IN ANY EVENT, the fundamental point of concern and importance is not to be gleaned from an analysis of the direct relations between the two governments. It is, rather, to be found in scrutiny of the quite appallingly lackadaisical conduct of British diplomacy. The Committee asks, in terms of complaint mounting almost to anger, why no steps were taken by the Foreign Office to procure a measured assessment of the developing situation in the Caribbean. Why, for example, was the British Government's view of such matters not made explicit by Her Majesty's representatives in Port of Spain and Bridgetown? If representation there was inadequate—and it was certainly under-strength—why was a special representative not sent? After all, President Reagan, despite an existing lavish diplomatic establishment in the area, also sent a special ambassador. And why, finally, when it became clear from Caribbean sources that whatever American policy eventually emerged would be crafted in the White House, did the Foreign Office continue to rely for information about American intentions on routine communication with the State Department? *Pace* Sir Geoffrey Howe, there are secure methods of communication between London and Washington.

AFTER REVIEWING the details of this sorry episode the attentive student of British foreign policy is certainly afflicted with a sense of *déjà vu*. For it was only in the previous year that an almost exactly similar inability to interpret obvious developments was evident in the period leading up to the war in the Falklands.

Again, a certain blithe indifference to evidence, which was perfectly plain to journalists on the spot in Buenos Aires, was displayed. A senior Foreign Office civil servant sought to dissuade a Fleet Street editor from publishing, and editorially supporting, a despatch from a correspondent in Argentina predicting an invasion, on the ground that it would cause unnecessary alarm. The editor preferred to trust his man whose reports over the years had established a reputation for reliability. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, took off on a trip to Israel. While this action might be taken as a laudable attempt to convey an impression of business-as-usual, there is no doubt that, while in Israel, he dismissed in airy fashion the predictions of his hosts that an invasion was on the way: anyone who disregards so readily the judgment of the Israeli Intelligence services is cavalier to say the least. In the event, as is now well known, Lord Carrington was forced to leave a Tel Aviv dinner table to return in haste to cope with General Galtieri's *putsch*.

Evidence has accumulated over the years—and I want to refer to some of it—that the Foreign Office, considered as an individual and highly privileged institution within the government, has been at odds on matters of policy with different British governments. Certainly, it had been clear for years that the FO took the view that the Falklands should be abandoned under the cover of a fig-leaf of propriety and that diplomats resented the repeated unwillingness of politicians in the House of Commons to allow this to happen. In a similar fashion, it is the opinion of the Foreign Affairs Committee that "a general recognition of the Commonwealth Caribbean's increasing post-imperial dependence on the United States" probably contributed to the feebleness of the United Kingdom's response to the developing Grenadian crisis.

BUT THERE MAY BE MORE here than lassitude emerging from indifference. Again, the matter can be illustrated from the Falklands affair.

On 8 April 1982 American diplomats accompanying US Secretary of State Alexander Haig found, according to them, that the Foreign Office was markedly less firm than the Prime Minister. During the same month Foreign Office officials made no bones about telling journalists—and particularly *foreign* journalists—that the FO was opposed to the sending of the "Task Force." During the period before hostilities broke out, we depended a great deal on the unstinting support of the US Armed Services. But again, in the middle of May, just before the San Carlos landings, and just before the Chequers War

[2] Hansard, 24.10.83, col. 27.

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Cabinet meeting of 16 May, the Americans were getting confused signals in London about British policy—the Prime Minister for "going on", the Foreign Office for "pulling back." Finally, in the first week of June the Prime Minister was in Versailles for the Western summit. International pressure on the United Kingdom to come to a settlement was intense and, in her absence, the Foreign Office put out feelers to persuade President Reagan and Secretary Haig to press her to make a deal.[3]

Nothing can be more damaging to a nation's diplomacy than the casual or deliberate provision of evidence to foreigners—well or ill-disposed—of division between a government and its professional advisers. Yet the modern history of the conduct of British diplomats is littered with such examples, starting with the Suez landings, proceeding through the fiasco of General de Gaulle's private approaches to our then Ambassador to Paris Mr Christopher (now Lord) Soames, and seen at its most recently debilitating in the steady undermining of the Prime Minister in her negotiations with the European powers on British budgetary contributions to the EEC during the early part of her first term of office.

The Foreign Office's unwillingness to see the country over-involved in the Falklands (an unwillingness shared by many critics) reflects a perfectly comprehensible view of the right course for diplomacy in the post-imperial age: the judgment being that nothing should detract from our European involvements and, to a lesser extent, the cultivation of the Anglo-American alliance. I happen to think that view wrong and to believe, for example, in the desirability, even the necessity, of the exercise of marginal influence in such places as Grenada or Zimbabwe. The fundamental point here, however, is not disagreement about right policy: it is a matter of propriety; and the exercise of judgment or influence against the declared wishes of one's government is improper conduct, to which the Foreign Office, on the evidence, is much given.

Another important question is this. As Sir Anthony Parsons in New York and Sir Nicholas Henderson in Washington showed during the Falklands war, there are still men about of an ability to match the traditional talents of British diplomacy. Is apparent incompetence—to read Argentinian or American signals—therefore more than incompetence? Is there, as many critics assert, a "plot", or a series of "plots"?

As put, the question is virtually impossible to answer. But if the modern FO has sought to undermine the policy of the government of the day it would not be for the first time. As long ago as 1914 Sir Edward Grey lied consistently to his Cabinet colleagues in order to ensure the pursuit of a policy which he favoured and they doubted. However, I believe it to be the case that the peculiar position of the Foreign Office within the British system of government—particularly the fact that it, unlike other departments, recruits directly, and does not encourage transfers in or out—strengthens undesirable tendencies and feeds on an arrogant departmental ethos.

The matter was well put by Mr Roy Hattersley, speaking of his own time as a Foreign Office Minister. "In my experience", Mr Hattersley told Peter Taylor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, "it is often more right than wrong on the issues that affect us, but the Foreign Office finds it difficult to believe that it *can* be wrong." He added:

> "With the exception of the Quai d'Orsay, the Foreign Office is on the very borders of contempt for the people with whom it does business. It is contemptuous of other domestic departments, contemptuous of the management of British industry, and contemptuous of governments of all persuasions."

To the same journalist Mr Peter Jay, once British Ambassador in Washington, was less complimentary and just as harsh:

> "In my experience it is by and large not true that a home civil servant will carry his doubts about Ministerial policy to the point of saying: 'It is my solemn duty as a citizen to ensure that the Minister's policy is not fulfilled, whether or not the Minister can be induced to agree with it'. . . ."

On the Falklands issue Peter Jay observed, "Despite the fact that successive governments had only agreed to negotiations on the clear proviso that eventually they would be subject to the wishes of the islanders themselves they [the Foreign Office] systematically acted on the basis that that condition would not apply."

It is also worth observing that a diplomat accredited to what might be considered an "outlying area" finds it harder to sustain morale than does a man at the centre of where his superiors consider "the action" to be. However, in reviewing the Falklands and Grenada affairs together one is struck by one remarkable point about technical diplomacy.

LORD FRANKS and his committee of Privy Counsellors examined the origins of the Falklands war.[4] It cannot be said that their report received a warm reception from anybody but the politicians whom it exculpated from all serious blame. It angered the harsher critics of the Foreign Office and was greeted by other critics with the indifferent shrugs of people who had expected no better. But Franks did make some recommendations for improvement in "Intelligence assessment." He thus admitted fault in the reading of Argentinian intentions before the invasion took place. And he made recommendations for the improvement of Intelligence gathering and the machinery for its assessment in London.

It is quite clear, following the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee that, if these steps have been taken, they have not worked. There are positively no grounds, even the assumption of a plot, for the failure to have Tom Adams's conversation with Mr Bullard considered immediately at the highest level in London. The most junior political journalist, given a moderate knowledge of Mrs Thatcher's attitudes (and particularly of the value she attached to intimate relations with the United States), would have been able to see the necessity of placing a minute of that conversation in her hands immediately, whatever the advice accompanying the minute was. I have made clear that my advice would have been to support the Americans and Mr Adams and the other Caribbean countries.

[3] Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, (Pan, 1983), ch. 14.

[4] *Falkland Islands Review: Report of a Committee of Privy Counsellors.* HMSO Cmnd. 8787, £6.10.

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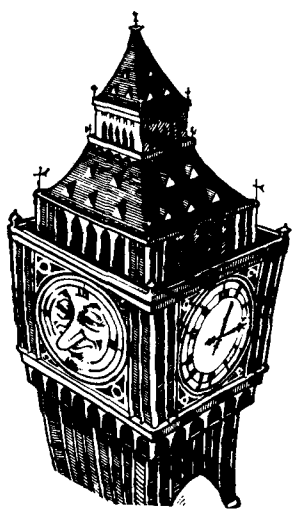
But it certainly would have been possible to argue for different courses. The vital point is that this was one of the rare pieces of raw intelligence which should set alarm bells ringing. It did not, and we were left with another example of that bungling, ham-fisted and limp-wristed diplomacy which has characterised so much post-War Foreign Office activity, and which some of us had been foolish enough to believe would not recur again after the Falklands war. It seems that serious reform of the Foreign Office is as urgent—and as far off—as ever.

London Commentary

The Department of Lethargy

Our Man at the FO

By Edward Pearce



DISCONTENT WITH THE Foreign Office takes many forms, the latest being Mr Norman Tebbit's corner-of-the-mouth aphorism: "The Ministry of Agriculture looks after farmers—the Foreign Office looks after foreigners." It is perhaps not literally so, but that picture is rather too credible. What many would say, in emendation, is that the Foreign Office looks after . . . the Foreign Office: the impression is of a Department of Self-Perpetuation. To put things very diplomatically, Britain's authority in the world does not get any greater, while the Foreign Office gets no smaller.

Such things are not greatly troublesome in ordinary times of peace and order. If the lads in Carlton Terrace and in the Diplomatic Corps can keep up the numbers at the cocktail-face, why be grudging? It's a long straw and a nice one; no point in resenting it. But the killing of the young policewoman Yvonne Fletcher in St James's Square, and the events surrounding her death, left one a little sick, and anxious to know much more—that more which the British system, so innately autocratic and secretive, will not permit.

The girl was murdered by a sniper from the Libyan Embassy after a peaceful demonstration by opponents of the demented Gaddafi régime. A story carried by the *Sunday Telegraph* informs us that instructions to shoot had been sent from Libya and that those instructions had been intercepted by satellite. This story has been played down in Britain, but the editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, J. W. M. Thompson, wrote to *The Spectator* to soothe a doubting journalist:

> "I can assure him that there is no doubt about the accuracy of our report. It was not based upon Whitehall 'disinformation' as he conjectures; nor was our source the Home Office where, I gather, publication of the details caused some displeasure. . . ."

I bet it did. And for the record I will take John Thompson's word as the last thing in old-style newspaper rectitude: if he says there was a message, there was a message.

What we don't know precisely is what was done with it. As a citizen, I would like to have a truthful account of the times at which the information threatening murder in a London square was transmitted by the interceptors to the Foreign Office, by the Foreign Office to the Home Office, by the Home Office to Police Headquarters, and by Police Headquarters to Miss Fletcher's senior police colleagues *in situ* at St James's Square. If everything was done efficiently, if there is a mistake about that message, or if the mistake was made at some other point in the hierarchy, we would know what happened and who to blame. But we don't know, do we? And we aren't being told. Mrs Thatcher has refused, in her teacher-knows-best way, to hold a public enquiry.

Those who refuse open investigation invite hypothesis; so let us accept the possibility that the Foreign Office culpably failed to communicate with another department, or did so too slothfully. The reason might be incompetence. It might be the arrogance towards other departments often urged against them. It might be that international preoccupation which prevents full consideration of the native population of this country. Perhaps it was none of those things and the fault lay with someone else, but as long as the shutters are up and free enquiry is forbidden, unfriendly conclusions will be drawn.

THE FOREIGN OFFICE did nothing during that dreadful week to endear itself. One accepts that with a clutch of Embassy

As the Shah Fell

By the end of 1975 I had, with the approval of the Foreign Office, reorganized the Embassy staff to meet our priorities. First came export promotion in all is aspects – dealing with the flood of business visitors and commercial enquiries, helping to organize trade promotions and trade delegations, seeking new commercial opportunities and feeding them into the export pdromotion machine back home. So the core of the Embassy became the commercial section.

With the limitations on manpower which afflict all government departments in most countries, this left me with a relatively small political section. To be fair, Iran was so important to Britain that, had I made a case for political reinforcements, I would probably have got them; all my requests for expansion of the commercial section of the Embassy were met, notwithstanding the pressures on public expenditure in Britain in the 1970s. The fact is that, rightly or wrongly, I was satisfied.

Sir Anthony Parsons
H.M. Ambassador to Iran (1974–1979)
in THE TIMES (*London*)

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personnel vulnerable to the whirling dervish of Tripoli it was necessary to protect them, and with them the British expatriates working in Libya—though what wisdom advised us originally, even in pursuit of oil interests, to undertake such extensive congress with a state ruled by a hangman whose brain hurts him, I do not understand.

It was indeed necessary to protect that group of people. And to that end we accepted a crashing and comprehensive humiliation. The murderer went home and took his gun with him under the protection of the Vienna Convention on diplomatic proprieties and, between clenched teeth, of the Metropolitan Police. The Home Secretary, Leon Brittan, did what he had to do and cannot realistically be blamed; but we could have done without the gross insensitivity of Ambassador Miles talking of his experience being "interesting" and the childishness of Mrs Miles leading her staff in patriotic songs. (Britannia rules *what*?)

But that irrelevant humiliation was foolishly and absurdly lacquered, first by parts of the government's publicity service and then by the Prime Minister herself, as "a triumph." Does that constitute an incredible miscalculation? Hitherto her worst critic would have given the Prime Minister credit for a certain plain-spokenness, a disposition to bite on the bullet. It was the pursuit of delusions and the use of make-believe language ("Our moral frontiers are on the Himalayas") which sapped Harold Wilson's authority by getting him laughed at. If you say things which are plainly not so, people will stop believing you.

It may be the instinct of officials to be silent and of Ministers to talk ambulating, self-evident tosh, but the facts left on the ground with Miss Fletcher are that a shooting took place; that we let the killer go unpunished at the requirement of a diplomatic treaty which worldwide terrorism has made into nonsense; that there are other killers in other Embassies; and that the same etiquette continues to protect them. Because Miss Fletcher was English and a police officer, enough heated and even offensive language from various healthily irresponsible elements in Parliament and the country at large compelled authority to do something: the cutting-off of diplomatic relations. "The ultimate sanction", Sir Geoffrey Howe called it. But when Georgi Markov was murdered melodramatically on Waterloo Bridge,[1] the fate of a Bulgarian exile living in this country and broadcasting for the World Service of the BBC did not warrant official regret. His murder did not even thin the ranks of those attending receptions at the Bulgarian Embassy, although, beyond reasonable doubt, he was stabbed on the orders of an official Bulgarian agency. A couple of Syrian attachés blew themselves up with a bomb intended for someone else; Syria has her representative still at the Court of St James.

It is impossible not to draw the conclusion that those responsible for foreign affairs approach mortal and urgent matters with a certain lassitude.

Incidentally, if Sir Geoffrey really does think the ending of diplomatic relations is the ultimate sanction, a sort of Armageddon among the smoked salmon, then his command of banality exceeds even expectation. Some sanctions are more ultimate than others. Did the Foreign Office give earlier thought to the matter of terrorism linked to diplomacy? The Syrian case and the Markov murder gave it plenty of time, but the Libyans—despite the clear indication that they operated a species of rookery behind Chancery walls, and despite possible support for the IRA, just went on and on in the normal way . . . like a speech by Sir Geoffrey Howe.

"Self-Contained Importance"

AN AWKWARD *silence descended on executives of the Fujitsu Computer Company in Japan yesterday when Sir Geoffrey Howe, Foreign Secretary, ordered a computer speech processor to identify Paris. It absentmindedly ran up the German flag.*

After his tour of the complex, akin to an operating theatre, Sir Geoffrey confessed he was slightly relieved to find Japanese machines could be fallible.

The visit to the Numazu complex on the slopes of Mount Fuji came on the last day of the Foreign Secretary's Far Eastern tour.

At the elegant British Embassy residence in Tokyo before flying home, Sir Geoffrey said his Far East visit had "a self-contained importance." He denied that he should have been in London, overseeing the Libyan crisis.

Edward Steen

DAILY TELEGRAPH *(London)*

LET ME OFFER a few wild hypotheses, since the Foreign Office is so secretive and respectful. We were unprepared for violence because, although we had been given plenty of clues and hints that something nasty might happen, we couldn't be bothered, we could not summon the energy to think about contingencies. The Americans had thrown the Libyans out years ago, but they had had an Embassy burned down and, as everyone knows, the Americans are cowboys. What the Foreign Office does best is inertia. And if inertia fails, then the Prime Minister can be counted on to make a statement of heartbreaking irrelevance about events having ended in yet another British triumph. In charge of electricity and gas, we have the Department of Energy. In charge of whatever it is the Foreign Office does, we seem to have a Department of Lethargy.

Now I am probably being unfair, certainly to some people. All anger at institutions should be tempered by thoughts of the curate's egg. An intelligent advocate of the Foreign Office (and they exist) would probably say something like this.

> "Look, this is all very tragic, and yes, we got it wrong. . . . But our preoccupation at the FO in recent years is one you might approve of. It has been with trade, business, landing contracts, in fact everything useful in the way of commerce rather than diplomacy in the classic sense. We follow Cobden rather than Metternich now. . . . And yes, that leads us into a measure of political amorality in that we want to do business with everyone, the way the British are

[1] See Kyrill Panoff, "Murder on Waterloo Bridge" (ENCOUNTER, November 1979).

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said not to be keen to do. Accordingly, we avoid unpleasantnesses even when we deal, as often, with the unpleasant—like certain Middle Eastern heads of State. . . . Our Cobdenite function involves a Cobdenite antipathy to all fierce gestures and warlike noises. We have a utility, and you do us an injustice. . . ."

I paraphrase what I believe to be the sentiments of the clearest minds in the Foreign Service, and I respect them. But one can obtain a synthesis from this dialogue. Yes, it is desirable that diplomacy should be heavily commercial and practical (though one cannot resist the observation that Cobdenism had its heyday under the wing of Lord Palmerston—blossoming in the turrets of gunboats). But should not new-style diplomacy dispose of the baroque frontage put up in the days of great-power politics? If we are running an international bureau of external exchange and commerce, why not say so? Why, indeed, not bring that part of the Foreign Office within the ambit of the Department of Trade (under Mr Tebbit, actually), leaving a small residual corps of pure specialists for the limited and occasionally real diplomatic purposes available to them?

Is not the Foreign Office the victim of self-deception and of public illusion as to its purpose? We are not, and will never be again, a great power. Membership of "Europe" and its "Community", seen by some as a great-power collective, turned out to be about butter and peasant-bribing and the unutterable frivolity of heads of government. The creation of a new political grouping has not happened and probably will not happen. Put very brutally, the test of a power is: "Can it make war?" Accordingly, Soviet Russia is a power; the United States is, tentatively, a power; the EEC is bottled gas. Certainly a grouping whose armies are unable to standardise and harmonise conventional weapons, but which is given to making public declarations about the Middle East, is a paper tiger. Not so much, more a paper milkman.

So what's with Britain's international role? Such of it as there is, is subsumed within Nato. Its responses to things not North Atlantic, like the unpleasantness in the Gulf and Soviet involvement in Africa, have been those of pained regret . . . and surprise. If we are not playing in any big league, then for God's sake we should say so. Let us not carry around with us the 17th-century impedimenta, of which the Vienna Convention is merely a codification, relating to the high contracting parties. We are a low contracting party, and should know the fact without delusions so that we can on occasions exercise some sense. The Falklands was a sort of dream, fought out against the illiterate descendants of Genoese emigrants for a few thousand acres of grade-five, uncultivatible, water-sodden ground. It cost 258 British lives and made us all feel big at the time. (For my small part, I acknowledge having got this one wrong.) But it was a farcical parenthesis in the civil life of an unsuccessful commercial nation whose real need is to sell wool, whisky, and co-axial cable to consumers able to pay cash.

To that end we need very few diplomats (and need entertain in Britain very few diplomats ourselves). We have all the excuse we need to chop back the numbers of every suspect country capable of using violence or sponsoring terrorism on our territory. How many Syrian, Iranian, Iraqi and Bulgarian diplomats are in this country, and how many are useful even reciprocally to us?

At the heart of the problem is a certain hubris (something less grand and Greek than hubris, actually): office politics. The FO says, "We are going down in the world as a department—better think of something to do—because whatever we do keeps the numbers up. . . ."

Such attitudes may even have coloured approaches to the EEC, which in greater days (when we should perhaps have quickly joined) the FO opposed; but which in the era of our decline, when the small doings of a small island state would not have justified the departmental establishment, we suddenly became avid to enter. The EEC hasn't done much for Britain as we juggle with our deficit, our budget contribution, our derogated fishing waters, our ripped-up-for-subsidy countryside, and all the other swings in a fair without roundabouts; but it has done wonders for the Foreign Office staff complement.

Suppose we were to face realities, transfer the trade and industry part of the FO to the Department of Trade and Industry. We wouldn't be able to arrest a future assassin in another St James's Square murder, but we would make such a murder much less likely. Foreign delegations would have to make a similar split among personnel and they would become very small. We could and should remove, either by negotiation or unilaterally, the inviolability of diplomatic bags.[2] Guns coming in, guns going out (with powder marks on them after use) are equally intolerable; and the diplomatic protocol which permits such *Schrecklichkeit* is a protocol to discard.

If we are being true to the spirit of Cobden, what do we have to fear reciprocally? Plants and fakes, presumably. But are we incapable of carrying baggage which is immaculate of guns or heroin, and known by reputation to be so? At present inviolability is a privilege abused in milder ways by more than the criminal caste of nations . . . for trivial duty-free purposes. A privilege has been created and, like all privilege, it curdles into abuse. Let us send our trade delegations out, inviolable personally but taking their chance on baggage. Let us send them to do trading work without affectation of grander or more dangerous things. To hell with the *Corps Diplomatique*. Let pure diplomacy be a marginal function, only used in countries where it has utility. Let us have fewer embassies. Let the notion of universal diplomatic activity, the grand ball in which all the petty states of the UN uselessly take part, be put aside. We are plain people of diminished importance who should acknowledge the diminution. Tragedy and frustration come from pretending otherwise.

[2] One exception should be made. Sir Andrew Gilchrist, in a letter (to the *Daily Telegraph*) which expresses the views of the sort of diplomat one truly respects, tells us that the single but quite crucial article which must have diplomatic privilege is the cipher. It, and it alone, is the justification for the diplomatic bag. A new Vienna Convention would approve the inviolable cipher bag . . . stating its exact dimensions.

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Recent Literary Criticism—By BERNARD BERGONZI

LITERATURE, it is often remarked, does not spring fully formed out of a void. Nor, for that matter, does literary criticism, and some recent critical books, mostly on fiction, provide an occasion for considering how such books come into existence and the kinds of discourse they represent. Four of them are collections of essays by established critics, one is a doctoral thesis, and two are books intended for an academic or student readership, probably commissioned or encouraged by publishers with strong "educational" lists.

The essay has been the vehicle for most of the important criticism of our time, and I am sure I am not alone in preferring to read collections of essays to single-minded monographs. Edward W. Said regards the form of the essay as itself significant. Criticism, he believes, should be "constitutively opposed to the production of massive, hermetic systems. . . ." This being so, "then it must follow that the essay—a comparatively short, investigative, radically sceptical form—is the principal way in which to write criticism." One can add in relation to Said's own practice that what he calls "relatively short" many people would regard as distinctly on the long side.

Length and tone and provenance of critical essays can be very variable. British essays frequently originate in the practice of literary journalism, as in the collections by Angus Wilson and John Bayley. Americans more often go through the practice of delivering papers at conferences and then publishing them in the academic quarterlies; since conference papers conventionally take an hour to deliver (an absurd convention, given the limited attention-span of any but the most determined auditor), the resulting essays are likely to be quite long, if not also long-winded. As it happens, there are no actual American critics represented here. But Edward Said is a Palestinian who is well assimilated into American academic life, while Frank Kermode, though a Manxman, and so a special kind of Briton, has closer and more extensive American connections than most British critics. A few years ago *PMLA* (*Publications of the Modern Language Association*) published an editorial survey of critical fashion, based on references to critics in articles submitted: there was a constellation of predictable American and Continental names, but Kermode's was the only British one.

Angus Wilson's *Diversity and Depth in Fiction*[1] covers thirty years of critical writing; it includes some lectures and broadcasts, but much of the material is in the form of review-articles or essays prompted by the publication of a new book. Wilson's literary criticism is always close to his own practice and interests as a working novelist; though he was for some years a part-time professor at the University of East Anglia, he does not write like an academic critic and has never wanted to. Even so, this collection had an academic midwife in the person of its editor, Kerry McSweeney, an American who teaches in Canada and who has written well on modern British fiction. He has made a very good job of editing the selection, and has provided a helpful introduction.

Wilson is the traditional sort of critic in whom advanced academic opinion might find much to deplore: naive empiricism, a belief in human nature and the solidity of fictional characters. I would not want to spend time on these objections, though they raise large questions about the gap between the way in which literature is created and the way in which it is currently received and discussed. I have to admit, though, that I am disconcerted by the ease with which Wilson moves from talking about characters in novels to talking about the character of the author. But in the 1950s, when he entered on his literary career, criticism, even journalistic criticism, was a lot simpler and more innocent than it has since become.

One of Wilson's great strengths as a critic is his total possession, down to the smallest detail, of the texts he is writing about. This is because he has been re-reading the novels he admires all his life. The editor quotes from a daunting account that Wilson published in 1961:

> "Within an approximate period of two years I still read again all the novels of Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, George Eliot and *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Within the same period I usually read also some novels by Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Balzac, Zola, James, and—additions made only in the past fifteen years—Conrad and Hawthorne. . . ."

As Kerry McSweeney rightly observes, "It is hard to imagine

[1] *Diversity and Depth in Fiction: Selected Critical Writings of Angus Wilson*. Edited by KERRY MCSWEENEY. Secker & Warburg, £15.00.

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many academic critics matching the scale and scope of Wilson's reading."

Throughout his career as a novelist Angus Wilson has been using, questioning, testing, and eventually undermining the forms of 19th-century realism. This creative engagement is reflected in much of his criticism, particularly in a group of essays, written separately but showing a common concern, on Dickens, Dostoevsky, Zola, and George Gissing. They are admirable as close criticism and convey something of the richness and variety of what is now often dismissively labelled "the classic realist text." Wilson's writings on later fiction are valuable as contributions to literary history, especially on the state of mind of the 1950s. For a time in the early '50s he adopted a stance which was popular then, though now it seems inconceivably remote. It was associated with the Movement and the attitudes of novelists such as C. P. Snow and William Cooper. It welcomed the revival of realism and plain story-telling about man in society, after the fine-drawn psychologism and arid experimentalism of '20s modernism.

James Joyce exemplified the latter, but even then people were wary of attacking Joyce, and Virginia Woolf made an easier target. One of Wilson's earliest critical pieces, written in 1952, was a sharp critique of Virginia Woolf, which earned him some notoriety as a critical iconoclast. Wilson completely changed his mind about Virginia Woolf, and in 1978 he published a second essay which praised her as a great novelist and retracted his earlier opinion. These changes are closely related to his own changing practice as a realistic novelist, though we are not obliged to see all the developments in his fiction as absolute progress, as I think Wilson would like us to. He is very articulate about his own writing, and his detailed exegesis of *No Laughing Matter* in an interview almost persuaded me to admire the book more than I do.

Wilson is an evaluative critic as well as an expositor or exegete; he makes firm judgments, which I welcome, even when I disagree with them, as I do rather often. This is old-fashioned criticism in a positive sense, since exposition has tended to take the place of judgment in recent academic writing.

FRANK KERMODE'S collection, *Essays on Fiction 1971–82*,[2] is not very like Wilson's despite a roughly similar title. As a professional academic critic Kermode is concerned with speculative theory and the underlying causes of things, though when he wants to he can be an outstandingly good reader of particular texts, as in the essay called "The English Novel *circa* 1907", and his discussions of novels by Conrad, Ford Madox Ford and Thomas Pynchon. If part of the interest of Angus Wilson's essays is in the retrospective light they shed on the literary climate of the 1950s, Kermode writes as an active participant in the cultural changes of the 1970s, and provides a comparable interest. In 1971 few people concerned with literary criticism in England knew anything about structuralism; by 1982 it had become impossible to ignore,

[2] *Essays on Fiction 1971–1982*. By FRANK KERMODE. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £9.95, paper £5.95.

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whether one was an enthusiast, an opponent or simply bored by it all. In his Prologue Kermode writes with fond memory of the seminar on literary structuralism that he conducted at University College, London, in the early 1970s, and to which some eminent people came, whose names he duly records; including, on one occasion, Roland Barthes himself.

In these essays Kermode conducts something of a running, interrogative dialogue with an absent Barthes, focusing particularly on *S/Z* and the idea of the constitutive codes of fiction. Kermode found that he had a lot to learn from the *nouvelle critique* and tried to impart what he learnt to his students and readers. But he never entertained the idea of the total obsolescence of earlier forms of criticism, including the kind once called New. He is of eclectic and eirenical temperament, looking for reconciliation rather than announcing absolute gaps and ruptures. He wryly acknowledges the difficulties he has encountered: "There is a war on, and he who ventures into no-man's-land brandishing cigarettes and singing carols must expect to be shot at."

The Prologue is a valuable personal statement of where Kermode thinks criticism had got to by 1982. He is uncharacteristically tart about the unreconstructed traditionalists, who "man the walls with their dusty banners: principle, imagination, the human world, though the most vocal of them are manifestly unacquainted with the first, lack the second and seem to know the third only by hearsay." At the same time he expresses deep reservations about deconstructionism, currently so fashionable in American academia.

Kermode's essays weave variations on certain basic and recurring themes, such as the tension between "sequence" and "secrets." Narrative is sequence, we read to discover what happens next; and yet the more we read, and the more closely, the more we realise that other things are going on in a text. They may be partly hidden and the author may not have consciously put them there, but they draw the reader into a secret discourse. Secrets, in short, are to sequence as chords are to melody. Kermode shows that even a classic detective novel like *Trent's Last Case* may encode quite other meanings from those that make us want to discover the eschatological secret of the crime. And in a novel of higher literary density the text can be rich with secrets, as Kermode shows in a splendid analysis of *Under Western Eyes*.

Uncovering secrets is expert work, otherwise known as "interpretation", which the plain reader, though perhaps a highly intelligent person, cannot be expected to do; he is mainly interested in story and sequence. Literary interpretation, like the interpretation of Scripture, is a matter for trained clerical exegetes. These are the academic critics, who have great freedom in interpretation, though they cannot say absolutely anything they please, even if it makes a kind of sense; Kermode refers to a man he once met who undertook to demonstrate infallibly that *Wuthering Heights* was an interlinear gloss on *Genesis*.

The academy is not likely to license that kind of thing. Some kinds of reading make sense to professionals at a particular time, and others do not, like the lucubrations of enthusiastic amateurs on Shakespeare or Burns or Blake. Underlying this approach is something like Thomas Kuhn's argument about the shifting paradigms by which scientific knowledge is organised and communicated. Kermode seems to think that critical interpretation is safe in the hands of the institutional experts, though I am a little uncertain of the tone in which he tells us this. Speaking as, I suppose, one of them, I am not so confident, and I resist the idea that professionalism is its own justification. I think of Morris Zapp in David Lodge's *Small World* who, when asked the anguished question, what *is* the point of academic literary studies, calmly replies, "The point, of course, is to uphold the institution of academic literary studies."

JOHN BAYLEY IS A professional and professorial critic who believes that life and letters are rather simpler matters than Kermode does, and who is probably suspicious of secrets. A major motif of his *Selected Essays*[3] is that the world is prior to and more important than the word. This conviction may make him sound like one of Kermode's uncomplicated "plain readers"; he is more than that, though. Bayley is, in fact, a very acute close reader, and, on occasion, a noticeably oblique writer whose meaning can be hard to construe. He flatteringly assumes that the reader will be easily in tune with the way his mind works and will not need his sometimes singular terminology explained.

There is an example in an essay on American poetry, where Bayley makes great play with a concept called "Otherness", which is never explained, though American poets are said to lack it. The major exception is Wallace Stevens, whom Bayley calls "the only great American poet to produce his own version of European otherness in poetry." By way of explanation, he continues, "Otherness with him is of course a form of absence, and a meticulousness in rendering the implications of absence for the consciousness of the poet." The tone is the familiar, intimate one of English literary journalism, and the collusive "of course" makes the reader feel that of course he knows what Bayley is getting at. But what he is saying has acquired the charged abstraction of Stevens himself and is comparably difficult.

Although Bayley's essays were all prompted by the opportunities of literary journalism, they are cunningly arranged to emphasise his particular interests in American and Russian literature. The book begins with a series of essays on American poets: Whitman, Stevens, Ashbery, Lowell, Berryman, Cummings. Then comes a small group on three English poets: Auden, Betjeman, Larkin, which is followed by a substantial group on Russian writers: Pushkin, Gogol, Blok, Akhmatova, Mandelshtam, Tsvetaeva, Nabokov. The book ends with three essays on writers of East European origin: the Yugoslav Poppa, the Polish-Lithuanian Milosz, and the highly cosmopolitan Canetti, who was born in Bulgaria and grew up to be a British subject and a Nobel prizewinner who writes in German.

On Russian literature Bayley is always rewarding and informative. He writes about it with pleasure and enthusiasm and conveys these qualities, and a sense of what it is in Russian

[3] *Selected Essays*. By JOHN BAYLEY. Cambridge University Press, £19.50, $39.50; paper £7.95, $14.95.

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literature that generates them, to the reader. There is, Bayley suggests, something in the nature of the Russian language that makes it easier to be sweepingly and unashamedly "poetic" than English. Near the end of the book, in the essay on Milosz, Bayley throws out some remarks that light up much of what has gone before, particularly his teasingly oblique attitude to American poetry. The truth seems to be that though he is very well read in American poetry, and evidently finds it of much interest, deep down he doesn't like it very much, or at least is inclined to disapprove of it. Putting matters very simply, Russian and English literature are about physical realities, *things*, whereas American literature is about consciousness.

> "Things, in the sense in which the nineteenth century novel—Dickens and Hardy and Tolstoy—both assumed and created them have not been central to the American literary consciousness. In their place have been legends and ideas and consciousness itself."

And as America does, so, these days, does the whole world, suggests Bayley, who is unhappy about the academic spread of structuralism and the vogue for self-reflective fictions like those of Beckett, Borges, Nabokov, Robbe-Grillet and Calvino.

There is an implicit polemic here, but Bayley is too polite or too uninterested to make it very explicit. He could be called a fashionable critic, in so far as he is much in demand as a literary journalist; but he is unfashionable in his lack of concern with the issues that are currently exercising literary opinion. His single-minded concentration on literature itself is admirable but disconcertingly context-less. I see Bayley as the mysterious mandarin of recent English criticism, talking fluently in a very low voice, while making gestures that are intricate, suave, and—very occasionally—threatening.

THE AMERICANISED PALESTINIAN Edward Said is Bayley's opposite in all respects, and in *The World, the Text and the Critic*[4] aptly illustrates his remark about the dominance of consciousness, or the consciousness of consciousness, in American literary culture:

> "Is the critical consciousness or criticism (I shall use these terms interchangeably) principally to deliver insights about writers and texts (in critical biographies, commentaries, explications, specialised scholarly monographs), to teach and disseminate information about the monuments of culture? Or—and this is what I believe to be the task—is it to occupy itself with the intrinsic conditions on which knowledge is made possible?"

Said is not a conventional campus guru. He is sceptical about Barthes and Derrida and the new orthodoxy of deconstructionism. He wants a political criticism which is socially responsible, iconoclastic, and deeply questioning of the system, or any system. He aspires, in effect, to be a radical of

[4] *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. By EDWARD W. SAID. Faber and Faber, £15, paper £6.95.

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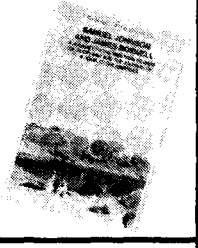

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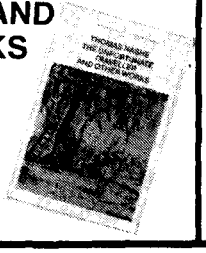

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the simple '60s, or perhaps Raymond Williams, whom he several times refers to with admiration. But he has adopted a mode of American academic discourse which subverts his matter; it is hard to be aggressively radical in such muffled, ponderous, painfully slow-moving prose. (His 21 opaque pages on "Conrad: the Presentation of Narrative" compare unfavourably with Kermode's much briefer and sharper discussion.)

Said is an intellectual heavyweight and very well read. And there are a good many topics in his book on which he is worth reading: on Auerbach and Lukács and Foucault, and on Western attitudes to the Orient, on which he has written at length elsewhere. But not, particularly, on literature, which like other highly politicised Leftist critics Said may not consider a viable or interesting concept any more; writing well about literature must involve initially believing that it exists.

THOMAS DOCHERTY'S CLEVER but unlikeable book, *Reading (Absent) Character,*[5] originated in a doctoral thesis and still bears the mark of that peculiar form. For instance, some familiar lines from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, quoted in a chapter heading, dangle a footnote reference that not only gives the act, scene and line, but the edition used ("Alexander text, Collins, 1951; repr. 1981"). This is where professionalism joins hands with absurdity. Not, to be fair, that Docherty is temperamentally a pedant or a dryasdust; indeed, despite his considerable learning, he is capable of unexpected flashes of ignorance, as when he suggests that Descartes was a Protestant, and refers to a poem by Wordsworth called "Tintern Abbey", which is said to describe Tintern Abbey.

Within the doctoral strait-jacket a very different kind of critic is struggling to get out: a bold, speculative, consciously laid-back man of letters, treading in the footsteps of Roland Barthes. The essence of what Docherty has to say might have been expressed in a challenging, paradoxical, pyrotechnically lively essay on the contradictory nature of fictional character; on the evidence, he might have done this very effectively. But protracted to book-length the enterprise gets bogged down. In the spirit of Barthes, Docherty believes that the classic realist text is dead, and so is the ideal of autonomous character that it enshrined. He is a thoroughly whiggish thinker, working with a paradigm whereby realism inevitably gives way to modernism, which in turn gives way to post-modernism. All fiction has thus been tending to the condition of the *nouveau roman* and Surfiction and the various other models disliked by John Bayley. Docherty's argument has something in common with James Mellard's *The Exploded Form*, which I reviewed here three years ago, but Mellard concluded that after post-modernism the only way forward led to a new mode of realism, which is not a possibility entertained by Docherty.

The attack on character actually goes back a long way, to the heyday of modernism. In 1926 C. H. Rickword wrote, "'character' is merely the term by which the reader alludes to the pseudo-objective image he composes of his responses to an author's verbal arrangements." For all his wide reading and theoretical subtlety, Docherty does not seem to me, in essentials, to get beyond this early formulation of the paradox of character. He is ensnared in a pseudo-problem, I believe. Old-fashioned critics may have talked as if Emma Woodhouse or Becky Sharp or Leopold Bloom were "real" people, just like us, but no one ever believed it in quite such simple terms.

Nevertheless, Docherty thinks that the idea of "character" must go, to be replaced by "position." Henceforth the reader will become a "positioned subjectivity", getting inside one character after another and seeing how they feel, rather like a woman in front of a mirror in a milliner's, trying on a succession of hats. The result, Docherty believes, will be a new and intense form of *le plaisir du texte*. Keeping the therapeutic as well as the hedonistic option open, he claims that readers will learn to "create themselves", and a discredited humanism will give way to a new humanity. These are fine words, but I remain unconvinced, believing that the old idea of character is still critically workable, provided one remains aware of its paradoxical nature, and refuses to believe that the fiction of Angus Wilson or Saul Bellow has been made obsolete by B. S. Johnson or Ronald Sukenick. Docherty's main and not inconsiderable achievement may be to have turned the wonderful talk and the cloudy but brilliant ideas of the wee small hours, as the second bottle of whisky nears its end, into a thesis and then into a book, surviving not only into the cold light of dawn but into cold hard print.

FAR MORE CONVENTIONAL, with a quasi-Leavisite concentration on major works and authors, is Grahame Smith's *The Novel and Society: Defoe to George Eliot.*[6] The topic does not initially look like one on which much more could be said, but after a weak opening he gets into his stride and provides a consistently interesting and illuminating study, using Ian Watt's classic *The Rise of the Novel* as both a starting point and a cause of reasoned disagreement. Smith expands on the idea that this rise coincided with the development in Western thought of "society" as a key concept. It is refreshing to find a non-Marxist engaging with these questions, and in fact Smith offers an acute analysis of the style of the *Communist Manifesto*, showing how it is permeated with the images and terms of melodrama: "images of villainy, of foreclosure, of threatened innocence, hover insistently around. . . ." In his readings of novels, "society" is not just a matter of "background" but part of the formal life of fiction, as contexts turn into texts. He is particularly good on *Persuasion* and *Daniel Deronda* as novels which are both formally and thematically transitional.

Peter Hutchinson's *Games Authors Play*[7] is a fussy but thin book, and might more accurately have been called "A Typology of Devices", these being discussed in short chapters arranged alphabetically from "Adumbration" and "Allegory" to "Red Herrings" and "Symbols." The notion of the game is

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[5] *Reading (Absent) Character: Towards a Theory of Characterisation in Fiction*. By THOMAS DOCHERTY. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £22.50.

[6] *The Novel and Society: Defoe to George Eliot.* By GRAHAME SMITH. Batsford, £14.95, paper £6.95.

[7] *Games Authors Play*. By PETER HUTCHINSON. Methuen, £7.95, paper £2.95.

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employed in what seems to me a very arbitrary way: sometimes the author is concerned with "fiction as game", sometimes with "games in fiction", and the general frame of reference is rather simplistic—drawn from Eric Berne, not John von Neumann. The author seems a bit out of his depth and may have been genuinely perplexed about whom he was writing for, and why.

The Power to Claw

On Samuel Beckett—By ALAN JENKINS

"THE DANGER", Samuel Beckett warned as he led off his one extended consideration of James Joyce (and his first "non-juvenile publication", as it is called by the editor of the volume where it now makes its reappearance), "is in the neatness of identifications." Steadily—in recent years almost at regular intervals—the Beckett canon has gone on augmenting itself. At one end of the incremental scale the phenomenon is a purely literary one, as Mr Beckett continues to issue, from his Parisian fastness, slender (but not slight) additions to his writings; at the other, it offers the spectacle of publishers and editors beside themselves with joy as they prise from him the bits and scraps of work he long ago, we are to imagine, consigned to a drawer in the same Paris apartment, or to the archives and library shelves that hold the yellowing pages of those journals which first welcomed them (and they were precious few).

At both ends the neatness of identification is still the danger. Some greet the increase with eager anticipation, excitement, enthusiasm; others, with alarm or groans of rueful resignation. Any of these can testify to a consensus of opinion or feeling as to what Beckett is about, and what to expect from him: further witness to a unique endeavour, further stages in the attempt to fix, with extreme persistence and rigour—saintly or insane, depending on your point of view—once and for all the lineaments of human suffering and deprivation. There is fixity here, but only in the sense that the published writings all bear the same signature and were unquestionably written by the same man. We may discern in them the preoccupations, the "imagined real" of someone disinclined to moralise, or to regard words as carriers of instruction and wisdom; to some extent this holds true even for the critical pieces. Likewise there *is* suffering, but it has nothing to do with the lack of goods and chattels.

Ruby Cohn has gathered together Beckett's *Disjecta*,[1] and deserves our gratitude for it. That first essay, "Dante . . . Bruno . Vico . . Joyce", is a brew of stern admonition ("Literary criticism is not book-keeping"; "You complain that this stuff [*Work in Progress*, or *Finnegans Wake* as it became] is not written in English. It is not written at all"; "Here words are not the polite contortions of 20th-century printers' ink. They are alive"), potted histories, compacted arguments, manically touted learning, and what can only be called flights of fancy. Other pieces written during "two bad years" in London and, we are told, representing the only thrusts towards literary journalism that Beckett can bear to see back in print, contain much the same mix as the above. Each piece, each sentence almost, is akin to an act of aggression; for all the marvellous lucidity of the writing and the bracing sharpness of response, the reviews are not really in the business of elucidation. Arresting insights there are in plenty; but more than insight, and much more than judgment, this criticism conveys a rebarbative, throwaway brilliance, impassioned and impatient, above all a kind of challenge—less a taking of the bull by the horns than an invitation to the bull to behave like one.

The attack is relentless. Something in Beckett rages against the absurdity of "a fragment of imaginative composition" about Mozart ("No one is likely to question the right of Herr Moerike to make what abuse he pleases of his own peculiar talents, but he should have been restrained from presenting the *Hexenmeister* of the *Jupiter Symphony*, the *A Minor Sonata*, the *Requiem* and *The Magic Flute* as a compound of Horace Skimpole and Wagner in half-hose"). It rages again at the fatuity of a book called *Comment Proust a composé son roman*: "Uniformity, homogeneity, cohesion, selection scavenging for verisimilitude (the stock in trade exactly of the naturalism that Proust abominated), these are the Professor's tastes . . .", and at an unfortunate volume on Dante:

> "To those already familiar with the versatility of Signor Papini's middle terms, it will not come as a shock to find him (Chapter 1) deriving from the circumstances of his having been born Florentine, embraced Catholicism and written verse, a peculiar aptitude to understand Dante. Nevertheless it is shocking, in its implication that these ingredients, racial, religious and artistic, were as agreeably accommodated in the case of Dante as admittedly they now are in the case of Signor Papini."

Yes, the attack is disproportionate to the crime. Yet the inten-

[1] *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*. By SAMUEL BECKETT. Edited by RUBY COHN. John Calder, £8.95.

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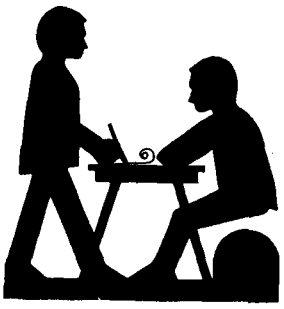

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sity of rage at such abominations is the measure of caring, of Beckett's love for Mozart, Proust and Dante.

WHEN THIS FIERCE GAZE is turned on Irish poetry, we find a different note reserved for a handful of names. The note can be embarrassing. Of Thomas McGreevy ("Brighten my darkness/ Towering in the sky/Over Dublin"), Beckett can find it in his heart to say, "It is from this nucleus of endopsychic clarity, uttering itself in the prayer that is a spasm of awareness, and from no more casual source, that Mr. McGreevy evolves his poems." Of Denis Devlin ("Frightened antinomies!/I have wiped examples from mirrors/My mirror's face and I /Are like no god and me. . . . "): "This is the type, the identity made up of cathexes not only multivalent but interchangeable. . . ." It may well be so, but, we remind ourselves, all this is anyway as it should be; McGreevy and Devlin were Beckett's great friends. There is another reminder here: for all Beckett's having repeatedly named the names that should raise a cheer anywhere—Laforgue, Corbière, Rimbaud, Apollinaire, Eluard, Eliot, Pound—and for all the acuity of his comments on those poets who were not also his friends, Beckett is a shaky, sometimes distressingly bad writer when he is writing poetry.

The feel of his poems, including his translations from French, even the lost and, according to a publisher's note, "miraculously" rediscovered "Drunken Boat" from Rimbaud (all of them now available in a collected edition[2] which enlarges on that of 1977 by the addition of "Mirlitonnades" and two snatches of song), is simply, or rather complicatedly, wrong. There are moments of hit-or-miss splendour, perverse felicities; but there is neither rhythmic tension nor vigour, the diction often goes haywire, and the many arresting lines have most to do, again, with the intensity of attack in the phrasing:

> *What an exfoliation!*
> *Her little grey flayed epidermis and scarlet tonsils!*
> *My one child*
> *scourged by fever to stagnant murky blood!*

Thus René Descartes, in Beckett's poem, about the same time the latter was paying tribute to James Joyce's words that "elbow their way on to the page, glow and blaze and fade and disappear." Soon after setting down his exacting discriminations with regard to Messrs. McGreevy, Coffey and Devlin, Beckett was compelled to this sort of notation:

> *. . . the stillborn evening turning a filthy green*
> *manuring the night fungus*
> *and the mind annulled*
> *wrecked in wind. . . .*
>
> *The great mushy toadstool,*
> *green-black,*
> *oozing up after me,*
> *soaking up the tattered sky like an ink of pestilence. . . .*

A twilight is "bleating to be bloodied", the hush is "crapulent", a girl is "main verb at last/her whom alone in the accusative/I

[2] *Collected Poems 1930–1978.* By SAMUEL BECKETT. John Calder, £8.95.

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have dismounted to love." (She *must* have fallen for it.) A few years on, and there is *Murphy*, exquisitely funny and elegiac, an unrepeated and unrepeatable performance turning on, "if you like, the Hermeticism of the spirit" (Beckett in a letter to George Reavey, included in *Disjecta*). Beckett's first novel, his only one given over to the "linkages of Flaubertian fiction" (Hugh Kenner's phrase), would be written in English—an English that makes the English poems look like exercises in a dead language.

Poems would still be written, in French, and on the whole would sound better ("*elles viennent/autres et pareilles/avec chacune c'est autre et pareil . . .*"; "*l'attente pas trop lente les regrets pas trops longs l'absence/au service de la présence*"; "*musique de l'indifférence/coeur temps air feu sable/du silence éboulement d'amours . . .*"), if still, to turn Beckett's scruple on Denis Devlin against himself, too much by the grace of Eluard and Apollinaire—both of whom Beckett had already translated, or would translate, without convincing anyone, least of all himself, that translation into English of such poetry as theirs can ever hope to produce compelling English poems. The imagist fragment "Dieppe" is beautiful and right, but some of the original Beckettian French poems have far too little of the *Murphy* wit and delicacy ("*bois seul/bouffe brûle fornique crève seul comme devant/les absents sont morts les présents puent*") although they are ostensibly written out of the same knot of despairs, guilts, sadness and rage. Some such complex of feelings can be sensed as part of the unsaid and unsayable burden of the novels written later in French, and it surfaces with varying but undiminished force in many of the plays written later still in English—particularly *Krapp's Last Tape, Eh Joe, That Time. . . .*

JUMP ALMOST FIFTY YEARS from the time of most of the *Disjecta*. Forget the suggestion of an orderly contour, a pattern, imposed in the last paragraph on one of the strangest, most singular and unpredictable ventures in bilingualism, and in fiction, of our time—a venture that had its second beginning not with *Mercier et Camier*, or even the story "La fin", but with the invention in French of a spoof artistic movement, complete with its leader, in an address to the worthies of the École Normale Supérieure. (The address is printed in Ruby Cohn's book, along with the criticism, the few surviving passages from the *Ur*-Belacqua novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, the play *Human Wishes*—a dull grind of an affair about squabbles in Dr Johnson's household—the art criticism championing the Van Veldes, and other fragments.)

With benefit of hindsight the perspective shifts. The pattern has been imposed by desire on what was prompted by very different desires—on what for Beckett was tentative, exploratory and, as often as not, *raté*; a series of false starts. These—some of them at least—are gripping, for they offer us the spectacle of a Beckett who is himself gripped, helpless before an immovable force made up of his own doubts, self-doubts, agonies and convictions. He deploys furious energies, verbal and intellectual, in writhing and posturing, ducking out of difficulties with a pun or a well-turned phrase, leaving only the faintest suggestion of how, one day, the battles might be fought

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differently, how surrender to words rather than mastery of them might release a different, more sombre voice, how instead of total adequacy and the free play of anger, impatience and great gifts he could create an art based on helplessness, poverty, inadequacy.

The story begins to sound familiar again, and everywhere in these early pieces there *are* hints of what came later; as yet, though, Beckett seems at times merely to be playing with notions, rather than setting down demanding and complex imaginative truths. The desires and despairs that shape his later utterance are pointed to and even declared, and often with a charge of bewildering intensity; but they sound like the formulations of a brilliant, disturbed student—as, to some extent, they are. "*Il n'y a que les tics justifiés qui soient indécents*", he says in his "Concentriste" manifesto, a sentiment worthy of Molloy; and in the same breath he dreams of an art "*qui, semblable à une résolution de Mozart, est parfaitement intelligible et parfaitement inexplicable.*" Belacqua in the *Dream* reflects on "the incoherent continuum as expressed by, say, Rimbaud and Beethoven. . . . The terms of whose statements serve merely to delimit the reality of the insane areas of silence, whose audibilities are no more than punctuation in a statement of silences", and, in the latter's music, he hears "dehiscence, *flottements*, the coherence gone to pieces, the continuity bitched to hell because the units of continuity have abdicated their unity, they have gone multiple, they fall apart . . ."; his resolve is to write a book that is a "boneshaker, held together with bits of twine, and at the same time as innocent of the slightest velleity of coming unstuck as Mr Wright's original flying machine . . . ."

In a letter to a German correspondent Beckett ventures: "And more and more my own language appears to me like a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it"; and again recalls Beethoven negotiating "a path of sounds suspended in giddy heights, linking unfathomable abysses of silence." Belacqua again, the literary critic: "To read Balzac is to receive the impression of a chloroformed world . . . he has turned all his creatures into clockwork cabbages. . . . The whole thing, from beginning to end, takes place in a spellbound backwash."

There is praise for Ezra Pound's version of "education by provocation", for Sean O'Casey's mastery of "knockabout in this very serious and honourable sense—that he discerns the principle of disintegration in even the most complacent solidities, and activates it to their explosion", and for the irony of Jack B. Yeats's *The Amaranthers*: "Ariostesque, as slight and as fitful and struck from the same impact, between the reality of the imagined and the reminiscence of its elements. The face remains grave, but the mind has smiled. The profound *risolino* that does not destroy." "Here scabs, lucre, etc., there torment, bosom etc., but both here and there *gulf* "; "The time is not altogether too green for the vile suggestion that art has nothing to do with clarity, does not dabble in the clear and does not make clear. . . ." There is plenty of this, up to and including the more sophisticated, and much more familiar, playful despairingness of the *Three Dialogues with George Duthuit*: "There is more than a difference of degree between being short, short of the world, short of self, and being without these esteemed commodities. The one is a predicament, the other not."

ALL THROUGH HIS WRITING LIFE Beckett has been aligning words which enable us to feel the truth of such glimpses without necessarily understanding them. To his creatures in their child-like decrepitude, solitariness, misery, darkness and impotence our hearts, as Hugh Kenner has said, "go out with profound and sombre and paradoxical joy." People speaking to themselves, reciting their pensums, reminiscences (pitifully meagre, as a rule), aches and pains—these have been the staple of Beckett's art, the stylisations of his compassion. "Don't mind me, I'm only talking to myself", says Mrs Rooney in *All That Fall*, the first play printed in a new volume of Beckett's *Collected Shorter Plays*.[3] From that piece (by comparison with more recent plays a work of Balzacian richness—and set, what's more, in a "spellbound backwash" which suffers in the closing minutes the intrusion of a terrible, violent death, the death of a small child) to the last, *What Where* (which translates to a more abstract plane the element of systematised cruelty in earlier, longer plays and distributes it among identical figures Bam, Bem, Bim and Bom in a recurring cycle of torture and frustrated desire for a "confession"), the weird centrality to our concerns, the texts' "power to claw" as Beckett put it, can be felt on every page, rigorously "experimental" though all the pieces are.

The broken bodies, disembodied heads—or disembodied voices—speaking to us of the voices they hear, of their memories of failed love, of caricatural adulteries, of "the dear face" and the restless shade, in old age remembering childhood or reaching out towards another person who might listen to a story of "great trouble", or sitting to hear repeatedly read by another person the "sad tale" until there is no comfort left in it, men and women increasingly ancient, increasingly identical or unidentifiable; from masterpieces of economy such as *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Embers* and *Come and Go* to *Not I* and *That Time*, the plays stake their claim on us—the claim not of sentimentality but of stringent, disciplined expression, a "claw" reaching deep into ordinary needs and terrors.

"Need" was the young Beckett's absolute condition for art. The essay in which he expounds it opens with a bold statement whose application to his own case he might, with Joycean imperiousness, have assumed, or more likely wished:

> *"Il n'y a sans doute que l'artiste qui puisse finir par voir (et, si l'on veut, par faire voir aux quelques-uns pour qui il existe) la monotone centralité de ce qu'un chacun veut, pense, fait et souffre, de ce qu'un chacun est."*

Never has his work seemed less "hermetically sealed" than now: it clarifies and sharpens with time.

The *Rough for Radio II* (mistitled in the Faber book as *Rough for Theatre II*) can be seen, again with hindsight, as in fact a gentler prototype of *Catastrophe*, dedicated to Vaclav Havel, the proscribed and formerly imprisoned Czech playwright (it was first printed in English in *Index on Censorship* for February of this year). To move from the earlier version of an explicitly sexual, self-delighting sado-masochism devoted to

[3] *Collected Shorter Plays*. By SAMUEL BECKETT. Faber and Faber, £7.50, paper £3.50.

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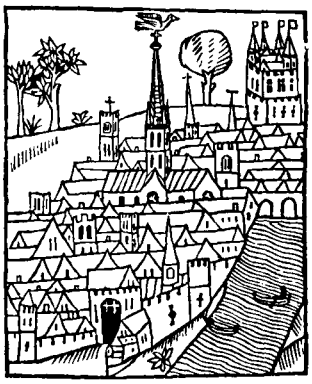
extracting a story, a stirring of emotion and a *frisson* of voyeuristic pleasure, to the brutal perfecting of a non-person, a "catastrophe" of a man (and both plays are of course about the painful exactions of the theatre, the ambivalent and never-innocent designs of the artist on his human material), shows a long distance travelled in a shortish time. It throws into relief the impingement of dark external realities on a darkening vision, the encroachment of history's nightmare on a personal *hantise*. But at the close of *Catastrophe* the Protagonist raises his head to fix the audience and silence their storm of applause. No surge of hope is being canvassed; the moment is as sinister as anything else. Yet in Beckett's work persons continue to stir, in spite of what the world or the writer does to them, or what they do to themselves.

Handmade Literature

Chaucer's Narrative—By BARRY WINDEATT



"So ofte a-daye I mot thy werke renewe,/ It to correcte and eek to rubbe and scrape;/And al is thorugh thy negligence and rape. . . ." In Chaucer's testy little poem to his "scriveyn" Adam lies all the frustration of a poet at the work of a careless scribe whose copy must be tediously corrected by the poet with much rubbing and scraping. Medieval poets often express a lively sense of the distortions of scribes and some misgiving as their writings slip ever further away from them through successive and unsupervised transcription. Looking back from an age of print it has been customary to stress the negative aspects of such a manuscript culture in the inevitable divergence and "inaccuracy" of texts. But more recent medievalist scholarship has grown self-conscious about the anachronistic expectation of uniform authorial texts and has turned to rediscovering the positive aspects of "handmade literature", to valuing medieval literary texts in the context of the ways they were as individual copies reproduced and used in a manuscript culture. "Inaccuracy" embodies response, even interpretation. In introducing the varied papers of a conference on the manuscript context of Middle English literature[1] Derek Pearsall is justly able to remark:

> "Reading is always an act in which we share with the writer in the making of meaning. Attention to the activities of the scribes, compilers, editors, decorators and illustrators of our fifteenth-century manuscripts helps to ensure that the reader's share is fairly apportioned."

To value the divergent manuscript traditions of a literary work as the distinct traditions of interpretation of that text by its first users can thus offer a contemporary guide to its early significance. A comparably recent sense of the value of distinct versions of the "same" text has prompted the project to edit (in some cases for the first time) all the separate versions of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, of which the B Text[2] has now appeared. Any surprise (or shame) that such a project should only now be undertaken simply underlines its value in giving at last a full scholarly treatment to these famous yet neglected documents. Not so unlike the differing manuscript readings of a later medieval poem, or the mix of variety and unity of taste and viewpoint in a Gothic manuscript compilation, the distinct textual skeins of this early medieval chronicle are being edited in a way that presents the text as it was interpreted from a number of valid points of view instead of from one single point of vantage.

A sense of the poet's context in a manuscript culture links a number of inventive recent books on Chaucer. While Derek Traversi works without the apparatus of specialism towards a "close reading" of a selection of *Canterbury Tales*[3] ("What is offered is an exercise in literary criticism"), three other studies—an introduction to Chaucer's language, an argument for the structure of *The Canterbury Tales*, and an illustration of both the iconographical background and the nature of the first five tales—all in their various ways and degrees are concerned with the influence of context, including manuscript context, in the interpretation of Chaucer's writing.

David Burnley's *A Guide to Chaucer's Language*[4] is careful to alert its reader to how the reading of texts in manuscripts may influence the registering of their language. The first half of the book ("The Language of the Text") contains an outline of Chaucer's grammar, and of such important matters as tense and negation, in as readably discursive a form as the particularity of the material allows. The second half of the book ("Variation, Context, and Style") is different in mood, and aims to develop the student's sense of the literary potential in the language described in the first part. Analysis of linguistic diversity, register and propriety, and levels of style builds towards a sense of what Burnley sees as the "Architecture of Chaucer's Language." For Burnley, behind the language of

[1] *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England*. Edited by DEREK PEARSALL. Boydell & Brewer, £22.50.

[2] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition. Volume 4, MS B*. Edited by SIMON TAYLOR. Boydell & Brewer, £19.50.

[3] *The Canterbury Tales, A Reading*. By DEREK TRAVERSI. The Bodley Head, £11.95, paper £6.50.

[4] *A Guide to Chaucer's Language*. By DAVID BURNLEY. Macmillan, £15.00, paper £5.95.

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some of Chaucer's lines, whose significance is in one sense apparent to all who read them, there is a kind of "architecture" of sense-relations and associations which derives ultimately from the internal architecture of the Latin texts upon which all organised knowledge was founded.

The metaphor of a linguistic and cultural "architecture" within the tradition of a language is a central one for Burnley in conveying how Chaucer can through his use of a linguistic architecture in English at once draw into his poems the accumulated shapes and forms of associations from the acknowledged linguistic "architectures" of Latin and of French. To read Chaucer with the most elementary glossing is to shut oneself off from noticing the "stylistic perspective" which its multi-cultural background could give to Chaucer's language.

The structural metaphor of the "architectures" of association within languages is a means of conveying the apprehension of how a language exists in structures and of how such structures can be alluded to within other related languages. It is a metaphor for the process of a reader's perception of likeness and relatedness between distinct linguistic wholes.

IT IS A COMPARABLE SENSE of the thematic architecture and context of the way the *Tales* have been ordered in the most convincing manuscript traditions that concerns Helen Cooper's *The Structure of the Canterbury Tales*.[5] Our understanding of unity must be affected both by the manifestly unfinished nature of the work and by the poet's evident intention that the finished tales should reflect the diversity and disagreements among the strongly differentiated tellers. A poem that was to reflect in its constituent poems a multiplicity of voices and points of view, and thus to reflect the essential fragmentariness of any perception of life, has itself been left by Chaucer's death in a fragmentary state as a text. It has sometimes been felt that Chaucer's papers were in themselves even more unconnected, and that the earliest MSS are the attempted articulations of early executor-editors. There are certainly contradictions and gaps which could not have survived a thorough authorial revision, just as there are also signs of the poet's decision to curtail the original extent of his design. The early MSS do probably contain a collection which embodies an authentic stage of the poem organised in a way which signals Chaucer's own intention and in that sense intact.

Helen Cooper's book provides a powerful literary argument for accepting the wholeness of the *Tales*, so persuasive is her analysis of the patterns of connectedness that link the tales together to their neighbours within the perceptible groups and fragments. The size of *The Canterbury Tales* and the pressures of educational curricula have always encouraged attention to individual tales at the expense of the whole and its framework. When Chaucer invites the reader to turn over the leaf from tales that offend it would be strange to pretend that Chaucer himself saw the *Tales* exclusively as a whole. He must have foreseen how the strong character of individual tales would impress itself. By pursuing the patterns in theme and image through the tales Dr Cooper at once provides a newly sustained

[5] *The Structure of the Canterbury Tales*. By HELEN COOPER. Duckworth, £24.00.

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sense of the tales as a whole and in so doing offers stimulating ideas on individual tales along the way.

The most satisfying patterns that she discerns are those within the manuscript fragments as we have them, the groups of tales which Chaucer has evidently already articulated into sequences ("the underlying principle of Chaucer's poetry, as of Gothic art, was juxtaposition"). *The Canterbury Tales* are linked by Chaucer's concern to:

> "bring out a number of interrelated themes in them, to set up a pattern of multiple perspectives. The result is a kind of cobweb effect, of lines of contact going off in a number of directions from any given point. But the hard fact that the stories have to be read sequentially, one after the other, just as they are told sequentially on the journey, means that they cannot be read as a cobweb: Chaucer has to start at some point on the thread and follow it in a certain direction."

The conceit of the cobweb is an intriguing attempt to grapple with the way the reflective reader's imagination perceives connectedness between the parts of the whole *Tales* on a different plane than the immediate following of a narrative of events. Contemplating *The Canterbury Tales* on such a plane—as the anticipations and recollections in Chaucer's writing prompt—thus embraces several levels of reading and interpreting: the immediate story and also its contribution towards a series of connections perceived by the mind as shapes and patterns of meaning that link and so define themselves across the intervening, meanwhile-enjoyed story. Chaucer's evident compositional difficulties in settling on an order of tales might indeed suggest this tension between progress and pattern. His reiterative attention to certain themes through the course of the tales enables the reader's sense of each theme to be modified both by its return and by the lesson of what has intervened since its last appearance. The models of juxtaposition as deployed in the arts, or of intricate narrative interlacing in romance, can suggest to us the medieval reader's educatedness to follow Chaucer beyond superficial incoherence and so discern thematic, moral patterns explored and developed through (only apparently) discontinuous narrative.

In *The Canterbury Tales* as "an encyclopaedia of kinds", Chaucer's method is thus "to juxtapose the different perspectives offered by different genres and to allow them to define or tell against each other" in a cumulative effect of inter-generic variousness and competition, complemented by Chaucer's admittance of the essential non-order of everyday life in the framework of the pilgrimage. This approach allows Helen Cooper to make commonsensical revisions of the excesses of earlier Chaucerians on such topics as Chaucer's irony ("There is a curious critical assumption that since Chaucer is often ironic in the *Canterbury Tales*, he must always be ironic"), or the weary subject of teller-and-tale ("The primary reason for assigning a tale to a particular teller is likely to be rhetorical, not psychological: the ascription derives from the story rather than the pilgrim"). In Cooper's reading the fluctuating perspectives provided by a succession of tales accumulates into a multiple vision which is impoverished if the tales are seen merely as individual psychological expression instead of advancing the inherent differences of perspective implicit in the competition of genres, a competition that

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John Gross, **Observer**

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juxtaposes—without imposing hierarchical discriminations—the insights of romance or *fabliau* or saint's life. The book embodies its view of the structure of the whole *Tales* by discussing the sequence of stories through the links of theme and image that bind them together, so that the thrust of the argument is as mobile, constructive and accumulative as its perception of the *Tales* themselves.

ROMANCE, FABLIAU, AND saint's life also dominate V. A. Kolve's attention to the determining narrative images of the first five tales in his *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative.*[6] His study—lavishly illustrated with photographs of medieval manuscript illumination—shares one aspect of Burnley's interest in its own concern with that process of recognition by which the alerted reader discerns the enriching implication for Chaucer's tales of some perceived relation between a governing narrative image and a whole thematic structure or "architecture" of iconographic tradition. Kolve is not essentially concerned with the visualising, envisaging power of Chaucer as a story-teller to make his readers "see" the events of the tales, although that use of mimetic image is clearly of interest to him. His book really concerns the implications of those iconographically significant images which lie at the core of each tale.

In *The Knight's Tale* the determining images are at one with the settings: the prison, the garden, and the amphitheatre in which the lovers attempt to settle the quarrel that has arisen in the earlier setting. These settings of the action are shown by allusion to the medieval arts to have a corpus of associations which lends depth, spiritual definition as well as universality, to the particular romance events which occur within them. The other tales of the first day of the pilgrimage are similarly explored with an eye to such determining iconographical traditions, and a case is made for seeing *The Man of Law's Tale* as part of the first manuscript fragment, along with the *fabliaux* of the Miller, the Reeve and the Cook. Against the full iconographical understanding of Noah's Flood in *The Miller's Tale* is set the clever undergraduate's duping of his gullible old landlord into believing that a second flood is about to engulf Oxford, with the planned outcome that the student can take his chance to sleep with the landlord's willing young wife.

Similar erudition is brought to bear on the iconographical germ of the Reeve's Prologue and his *Tale*, where the medieval iconography of the horse as a symbol of irrationality and of male lust is applied to Chaucer's Cambridge *fabliau*. Here the crooked miller's unleashing of the horse of the two students is at once the first move in the action and an appropriate symbol of the releasing of sexual energies, which is to rebound on the miller when the students revenge themselves for his robbery of them by copulating with both his wife and his daughter. The last tale covered by this volume, *The Man of Law's Tale* of the saintly Constance, is perhaps the most fertile ground for Kolve's method: his exploration of the iconographical significance of the rudderless boat and of the sea in medieval artistic and moral tradition helps add extra dimensions of interpretable

[6] *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative, The First Five Canterbury Tales*. By V. A. KOLVE. Edward Arnold, £35.00.

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meaning to this highly patterned tale of the Roman emperor's daughter, who has first one and then another murderous mother-in-law in her life, both of whom cause her to be set adrift in a small boat to wander the seas of this world sustained miraculously by God.

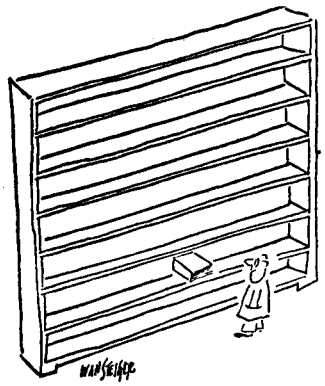
THE RICHLY ILLUSTRATED appearance of Kolve's book is itself of course designed to recreate in the modern reader's eye something of the recall of visual traditions stimulated originally by the reading of Chaucer's poems, of which the existing manuscript illustration is meagre indeed. There is interesting discussion of illustrations to medieval books which themselves attempt to sum up in one picture that "picture" of meaning the whole book contains—those pictures which books are meant to present to the reader's inner eye.

Images were considered the means by which a writer was understood to stock his mind, discover his material and remember that invention. When Chaucer in his *House of Fame* recalls the story of Dido and Aeneas, he presents a poet remembering a poem he has read as a series of pictures, by way of fashioning a new poem that describes those pictures as though they were real. Here Kolve sees a paradigm of how narrative poems are made, received and remembered. By their use of iconic narratives medieval poets create literature that is significant in ways extending beyond the pleasure of narrative as process. For Kolve the iconographic image is discovered within the images one forms in attending to the narrative action itself and invites recognition through the ways it resembles symbolic images known from other contexts and drawn from a known medieval language of sign.

In Kolve's approach such images have their significant existence at the level of whole poems. It is not a question of diminishing Chaucer's narrative to an icon but of seeing how an icon may act as the centre that determines the deepest interpretation of the poem. For Kolve "such images constitute the major way Chaucer sought to make a fictional construct coterminous with, but not the same as, a literature of wisdom." To read Chaucer in this way requires that we reach back towards a kind of visual literacy which was part of literacy in its most complete sense: the sense of context which medieval readers brought to his work and that of other medieval poets when they picked up one of those to them most pricey and special objects—a book. As Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* admonishes its readership: "Take every man now to his bokes hede."

Being in Error

Geoffrey Hill's Criticism—By ERIC GRIFFITHS



STEPHEN DEDALUS was a young hopeful. When John Eglinton suggests that Shakespeare made a mistake in marrying Ann Hathaway, he replies: "A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery." What this declaration of the rights of supermen seems to mean is that Shakespeare got married as an experiment in character formation and lived in a permanent state of technological mastery over his own personality, a "fail-safe" monitor of his own reactions. Presumably, Stephen would have taken it as a sign of his own genius that a few minutes earlier, expounding his wilful theory about *Hamlet*, he misquotes the play. (The Ghost does not say the line "Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit" which Stephen puts in his mouth.)

I don't know what James Joyce thought of the mistake, or even if he knew it was one; but it would probably be fair to say that, prodigiously calculating though he was in his writing, the calculations normally allowed him a boozy latitude of self-forgiveness. *Ulysses* is, after all, a cheery and fuddled book in appearance, great as the effort was to keep up that appearance—and Joyce might in justice have passed such latitude on to his creations.

Geoffrey Hill is harder on himself. In the first essay of *The Lords of Limit*[1] he speaks of being "possessed by a sense of language itself as a manifestation of empirical guilt", and admits that such possession reduces under scrutiny to "an anxiety about *faux pas*, the perpetration of 'howlers', grammatical solecisms, misstatements of fact, misquotations, improper attributions." He frets and sorrows over what comes home to him as the strain of failure in all human discourse, a failure most sharply instanced in small faults just because they are in themselves not very significant. There is a possible analogy with a theologian who might find that venial sins laid more bare the tottering state of the human will by their diminutive inevitability than greater and more escapable wickednesses. This anxiety, and the answering conduct (Hill reads proofs meticulously, his quotations are from the best texts available, his footnotes minutely careful) are no less a virtue in him because it is not a virtue that could happily be practised generally at his pitch of intensity.

To err is human, to forgive divine, and, though someone who was prompt to forgive himself errors might be playing God

[1] *The Lords of Limit: Essays on Literature and Ideas.* By GEOFFREY HILL. André Deutsch, £12.95.

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over his own life with a comfortable alacrity, it is necessary to forgive oneself as well as other people for wrong-doing, if only to preserve the distinction between the hunger for righteousness and a greedy zeal for always being in the right. Hill fairly concedes that a comic relaxation may be as apt a response to linguistic slips and minor inaccuracies as his own characteristic, apprehensive rigour. The last essay in the book, "Our Word is Our Bond", treats of the culpability of Ezra Pound for his broadcasts over Rome Radio during World War II. Here error is not in what will seem to some an excessive diffidence about tiny details, but in Pound's unfaltering conviction of the poet's claim to an absolute rectitude of judgment, a belief that the poetic vocation confers a right to pronounce on culture. "A man of genius makes no mistakes", but Pound's manner of believing that took him out of James Joyce's company into that of William Joyce.

Hill's study of this case of "irredeemable error in the very substance and texture of [the artist's] craft and pride" searches the issues involved more profoundly than any previous writing on the subject. One reason why this is so is that he does not set apart "craft" and "pride", but comprehends the vice that may be inherent in skill itself; and he arrives at such comprehension by beginning from the technical mishaps to which writing is prey—*il n'y a qu'un faux pas* from sublimity to the ridiculous, or something worse.

SUCH PRESSING CONSCIOUSNESS of the "concomitant infelicities of clearing one's meanings at an extreme pitch of concentration and in circumstances of complex difficulty" doesn't make the going easy; but then not even his worst enemy would say that Geoffrey Hill was an easy-going writer. *Mercian Hymns* gives us rich grounds to believe that though Hill was a nice child, he probably wasn't nice and easy. "Dreamy, smug-faced, sick on outings", as the fifth Hymn has it. Behind these lines, we can imagine the coercive pleading of parents: "Now, don't be difficult, Geoffrey." With various accents of bafflement or of teased delight, his readers now reiterate that cry; he is known (*The Fontana Biographical Companion to Modern Thought*) as a "notoriously difficult" poet.

The debate about "difficulty" in modern literature—between champions of the daunting like Lionel Trilling in his essay on "The Fate of Pleasure" and the standard-bearers of enlightened philistinism, amenably unafraid of the "obvious", such as Philip Larkin—seems to me usually to get set up in a misleading way, because it confuses two manners of being difficult. A writer may be difficult through the intellectual onerousness of his works, and in this sense Shakespeare is at least as difficult a writer as Ezra Pound; but there is nothing especially "modern" about such difficulty. Or the writer may be difficult in the ways that not only children can be difficult in ordinary life—by being a stickler for correct procedures where a little laxity would speed things up and smooth them over; by putting the worst construction available on something said or done; by always having one more "Why?" when one has run out of "Because."

There is a difficulty of substance that is willed on the writer by the topics with which he deals; and there is a difficulty of manner, which may at times seem wilfully adopted, but may be unelected, demanded by his endeavour to engage the reader with his own sense of the first kind of difficulty. Hume and Kant, for example, deal with many of the same philosophical problems, and are in this sense equally difficult writers; but Hume adopts an ease of manner which is not difficult in the second sense—indeed it is positively, and perhaps deceitfully, socially ingratiating. Or if we compare two poems about British foreign policy—William Empson's "Courage Means Running" and Philip Larkin's "Homage to a Government"—we can see that the topic considered is in both cases difficult, but that Larkin fabricates formally a casual tone which permits exactly those snap judgments which Empson works to circumvent.

THERE WOULD BE SOME justification for thinking that this second kind of difficulty—a social awkwardness in the conditions under which literature is received—is distinctively "modern." The evidence Geoffrey Hill has painstakingly amassed in *The Lords of Limit* suggests rather that the problem is constantly acute, though protean in the forms it may take; that it arises from a permanent friction between the writer's attempt to speak representatively for the national community and a recognition of his own fractional position within that community, or from even deeper rifts of attitude to the writer's operation in language:

> "those for whom writing is like 'bearing a part in the conversation' must regard with incomprehension those for whom it is 'blindness' and 'perplexity' and . . . those for whom 'composition' is a struggle with dark and disputed matter will inevitably dismiss as mere worldliness the ability to push on pragmatically with the matter in hand."

That is openly even-handed, but Geoffrey Hill's sympathies throughout this book lie with those who neither possess nor long for what Baudelaire called "that flowing style beloved of the *bourgeoisie*." Hill's poetic work, so stubbornly quarrying in the societal history of word and cadence, inclines him to a social touchiness as regards language, and he is capable of making it look as if the only alternative to his combative sensitivity is tactlessness.

It might be countered that a grasp of the practical variety of acts of communication lets us know that on one occasion nothing but the most strenuous delicacy in handling our words with a maximal sense of their weight of possible tendentiousness will do, and on other occasions we need rather the courage of good humour to give and take words lightly: sometimes, that is, you may be writing the sort of poem Hill writes, and sometimes you may be passing the time of day. But to this I imagine he would reply that my notion of practical grasp merely cloaks an acquiescence in the received usages of society—an acquiescence which needs watching because the clubbable man may turn out to be a quisling. So he writes, for example,

> "It may be agreed that in such locutions as, say, 'the language of polite letters' more is implied than 'the methods of combination of words.' Such a 'language' is in fact a 'code' of acceptances, a consensus of taste or prejudice."

Hill's brilliant essays on T. H. Green and Gerard Manley

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Hopkins provide excellent reasons for suspecting the "off-the-peg" convenience of an unexamined consensus in language, as when he quotes the economist Alfred Marshall's claim that economic studies "call for and develop the faculty of sympathy, and especially that rare sympathy which enables people to put themselves in the place, not only of their comrades, but also of other classes", and takes a bead on that "in the place." While acknowledging that "such phrasing is so much part of innocuous common parlance that to object is a sign only of hermetic irritability", Hill rightly trusts to his vexation and observes the way the fluency of the phrase surreptitiously offers a guarantee of the facility of the process Marshall is describing, a facility we might well have doubts about:

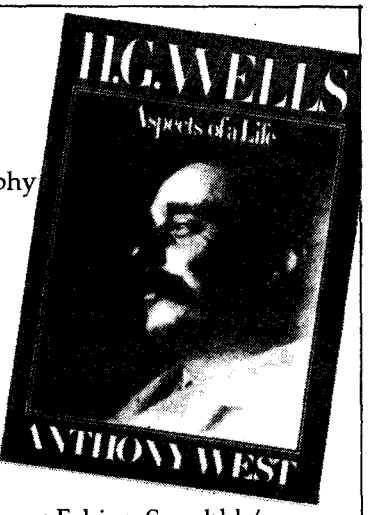
> "And there is, in this form of illicit persuasiveness, a hint of the despotic . . . it is less a matter of language living in usage than of usage perching and hatching parasitically upon the surface of language."

That glancing metaphoric vision of usage as a scabies of language typifies the vivid brevity of Hill's critical writing at its best. It offers a rebuke to those who imagine that linguistic permissiveness which recognises no standard of usage, because usage is a law unto itself (I am thinking of Professor Randolph Quirk), is merely an expression of cultural generosity, without noticing that here too permissiveness may afford opportunities for exploitation. Criticism of such sharpness requires a capacity for being nettled by words, and that capacity is a sign of an inability to be calmly indifferent to the daily laxities of talk. This may be a hypersensitive morbidity, but then, as Saint Augustine wrote, "hardness does not necessarily imply rectitude, and insensibility is not a guarantee of health."

THE SAME EAR WHICH OPERATES in Hill's poetry, with its exceptional range and finesse of dictions antagonistic and reconciled, works in the criticism too, catching turns and wobbles of phrase across a gamut of writing wider than that normally dealt with by "literary" criticism.

A political petition of 1648 helps to illuminate the rhetoric of Jonson's Roman plays, or a declaration of the Nottingham branch of the United Committee of Framework-Knitters combines with Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality . . ." to give a startlingly original and persuasively insightful context for Gerard Manley Hopkins' rhythmic practice.

That last instance again displays Hill's major strength as a critic—a determined prickliness about the social *mores* of language which his intelligence succeeds in turning from bad temper into the sophisticated attunement of an equable temperament in face of its own language. When he writes that "Social locutions which to others might be scarcely more than half-comic irritants impose upon the Nottingham framework-knitters a force as shiftless as that of nature itself", and shows the detailed reciprocal pressure of word and work, he achieves an intimate understanding of the relations of imagination and social actuality. In comparison, all the English Marxist criticism I know which addresses itself to similar questions appears linguistically ham-fisted as well as theoretically hamstrung. He earns of his readers at such moments the admission that Auden



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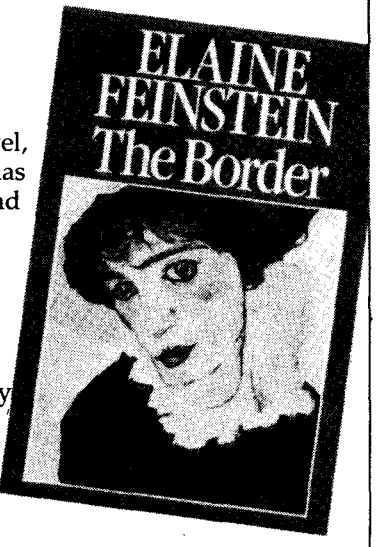

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makes in the poem from which *The Lords of Limit* takes its title:

> *We know you moody, silent, sensitive,*
> *Quick to be offended, slow to forgive,*
> *But to your discipline the heart*
> *Submits when we have fallen apart*
> *Into the isolated personal life.*

THE LORDS OF LIMIT is the most important first book of criticism by a major English poet since *The Sacred Wood*. It has little of the *brio* of T. S. Eliot's book, but that is not only because Eliot was a jollier soul than Geoffrey Hill. Asking himself why he wrote criticism, Eliot remarked: "The creative artist in England finds himself compelled, or at least tempted, to spend much of his time and energy in criticism that he might reserve for the perfecting of his proper work: simply because there is no one else to do it." His "simply" sounds blithe nowadays; there are plenty of people doing criticism in departments of English up and down the country. The critical air is thick with exegesis, annotation, and the acrimony of scholarly dispute. (Putting it that way sounds only despondent about the industry of academic commentators, which is not my point.)

Hill's criticism effects a substantial, and thoroughly substantiated, reappraisal of the concept of "mastery" as it is used in criticism. The implications of his work are more consequential for literary criticism than that of anyone writing literary criticism in the last half-century (apart from William Empson). But the language of his criticism too often colludes with the "magisterial" just in the instant that it questions the "masterly"; Hill's admirable profundity of apprehension of the ways in which words may be mis-taken is wronged by a professionalised wariness about being taken amiss.

All the show of academic punctilio parades in these pages, with a studied impeccability of manner which I suspect of being reproachful and jokey in the style of Jeeves. What is one to make of the fact that this great poet is so inertly addicted to the double-negative when he writes as a critic (for the pages are littered with "a not unfamiliar modernist theory" and "not unreasonable to suppose" and "not without significance" and "not infrequently")? Or of the recurrent "It is at least open to suggestion", which demurely introduces suggestions of a breathtaking and bracing critical audacity? It may be that the integrity of "scruple" inevitably cooperates in major writing with the canny nervousness of "strategy" ("scruple" and "strategy" come next to each other on pp. 5 and 90), but the style of much of this book concedes so much to merely institutionalised proprieties that it runs the risk of making its vital scruples look merely strategic.

GEOFFREY HILL has had to earn his living by being an academic, but he is not an academic critic. Consider the phrase from Bacon which gives him the title of one of the essays in this book: "the true conduct of human judgment." Compare that with Leavis's phrase, adopted from Johnson: "the common pursuit of true judgment." Leavis looks doubly confident in

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contrast to Hill—his critical pursuit is shared ("common") and it terminates in correctness ("true judgment"). Hill's endeavour experiences more tremor about the communal quest (how perpetually cautious one must be to separate "*true* conduct" from a businesslike acceptance of methods which might be no more than a fund of funded misconduct), and looks more askance at the promised results ("human judgment", which, being human, has its being in error).

Proust misquotes often as a critic because he quotes from memory, and that is all right because he has given us such compelling reasons for being interested in his memory, vagaries included, outside his criticism; Eliot allowed a misquotation of Tourneur to stand from *The Sacred Wood* to the last edition of *Selected Essays* he saw through the press, and beyond. It is a sign of Hill's humility that he doesn't grant himself such licence as genius may claim in these matters, but that shouldn't disguise from us the fact that it is with Eliot and Proust that he belongs as a critic, and not with the lesser worthies.

One extraordinary privilege of genius is to create the atmosphere of conversation within a resistant medium, but this Hill's criticism, unlike his poetry, fails to do. Fails, I think, because of a false valuation of correctness and an uncharacteristically one-sided imagination of what conversation is like. All the emphasis in this book falls on speech as an ease and a social fluency, and on the activity of the writer as a "dogged resistance" to the assumptions and presumptuousness of such ease. If we remember Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* and his embattled elaboration of a dubious theory about *Hamlet*, it will not seem that all the comfort belongs to those who bear a part in the conversation and all the agonised struggle to the writer. The episode in *Ulysses* in which the characters make play with Shakespeare while Joyce arranges allusions to his plays—so that it seems as true to say that Shakespeare is quoting them as that the characters quote him—may stand as an emblem of Hill's book. Unlike each other as the wilfully erroneous Stephen and the wilfully accurate Hill are, they each engage in the critical game with, as Hill writes of *Cymbeline*, "an edgy watchfulness to the play's virtuosity." The *Ulysses* episode ends:

> "Cease to strive. Peace of the druid priests of Cymbeline, hierophantic: from wide earth an altar.
>
> *Laud we the gods;*
> *And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils*
> *From our bless'd altars."*

The Lords of Limit also turns to these lauds with a keener sense of their limitations:

> "The poetry is both plangent and jagged. 'Should not the smoke of an acceptable sacrifice rise undeviously to the heavens?' It is a proper question. Cymbeline's command makes an uncontrollable element appear deliberate, converting the accidental and the thwart into a myth of order and direction."

The tribute Hill pays in his writing to "the accidental and the thwart" demands a grateful recognition, even if he has been less able in his criticism than in his poetry to make such tribute the substance of his words. Crooked smoke, perhaps, but there is still life in the old hope that "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth."

Rabbit Reviewer

Updike & the World of Books—By DAVID LODGE

"OUR WORLD OF BOOKS, like most other worlds now, is the arena of an increasingly bitter struggle for space, and for the limited reading time that a busy citizen in this electronic age can afford." Thus John Updike, on page 877 of *Hugging the Shore*.[1] No, that page number is not a misprint: this collection of his occasional prose, mostly book reviews contributed to *The New Yorker* over the past eight years, runs to over nine hundred pages, including the index.

Is there not something paradoxical, you might ask, even inconsistent, about drawing attention to the problem of literary *Lebensraum* in a book which makes such a greedy claim on the reading public's time and energy? Updike seems to have included here every review he published since his last such collection, *Picked-up Pieces*, and has thrown in for good measure a number of journalistic items (including an unpublished squib that has been lingering in the files of *The New Yorker* since 1961), some lectures on classic American fiction, introductions to reprints of his own books, award-acceptance speeches, replies to questionnaires, and an interview with himself by his own fictional creation, Henry Bech. One would not be entirely surprised, by the end, to come across transcriptions of his marginal notes on all the other books he happened to read or re-read these past eight years.

"A man", opined Jane Austen's Mr John Knightley, when invited to dine with Mr Weston in late December, "must have a very good opinion of himself when he asks people to leave their

[1] *Hugging The Shore*. By JOHN UPDIKE. André Deutsch, £21.00.

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own fireside and encounter such a day as this, for the sake of coming to see him. He must think himself a most agreeable fellow." And a man, we might think, in the same crusty mood, must have a very high opinion of himself who would dump in the lap of the reading public, and on the desks of his fellow reviewers, an unabridged compendium of nearly a decade's fugitive literary journalism. Most readers of *Hugging the Shore*, whether they browse in it, or conscientiously turn every page, will, however, absolve the author of overweening vanity. He *is*, after all, like Mr Weston, an agreeable fellow (almost nothing in the book is dull or badly written); and, unlike Mr Weston, he is shrewdly and ironically aware of the presumptuousness of his enterprise. "Another book. Another slain forest. Another pious claim on our besieged pocketbooks", he sighs self-accusingly in his Foreword. "Even in the age of Ecclesiastes . . . the need for more books seemed doubtful." About writing the original reviews themselves, however, Updike is unapologetic:

> "Book *reviews* perform a clear and desired social service: they excuse us from reading the books themselves. They give us literary sensations in concentrated form. They are gossip of a higher sort."

The very undiscriminating inclusiveness of this book makes it a fascinating record of a modern reviewer at work. I say "a" rather than "the", because Updike is not a wholly typical book reviewer. As a distinguished novelist, writing for a quality journal with which he has had a long and happy professional relationship (he was actually on the staff of *The New Yorker* for two years at the start of his literary career—and includes in this volume an evocative memoir of his apprenticeship on "Talk of the Town"), he enjoys a relatively privileged position—able, one supposes, to pick and choose his books, and to discuss them at much greater length than the average newspaper reviewer has at his disposal. Nevertheless, if one were asked to pick out a representative, non-specialist reviewer of our time, John Updike would be on most people's short-list. It is some time since John Gross pronounced the obsequies over the Man of Letters, but Updike has succeeded better than most in perpetuating that in many ways admirable profession—a profession in which there was always an essential quality of amateurism.

ONE CANNOT BUT BE IMPRESSED by Updike's willingness to take on, as a reviewer, almost anything and anybody: not only American and English fiction, which one would expect, but also a wide range of foreign novelists—Jarry, Queneau, Céline, Pinget from France; Grass and Böll from Germany; Calvino from Italy; Lem and Shulz from Poland; Bely and Trifonov from Russia; Milan Kundera from Czechoslovakia; Sembène Ousmane, Wole Soyinka, and T. Obinkaram Echewa from Africa; Natsume Sōseki, Junichirō Tanizaki and Shusako Endo from Japan—and not only fiction, but also poetry, folklore, anthropology, theology, travel, autobiography, literary criticism and art criticism. Rarely does he seem to be out of his depth, and on such occasions he turns his discomfiture to rhetorical advantage. From Roland Barthes' *S/Z* (an exhaustive semiotic analysis of Balzac's story, "Sarrasine"):

> "the reader emerges, as from that imaginary machine of Kafka's which engraved commandments upon the transgressor's skin, lexically enriched, but lacerated; I cannot remember another book ostensibly in the English language which gave me such pains to peruse. . . . [Barthes'] style is dense, tense, nervous, parenthetical, sometimes arch, and faintly insolent. He often seems to be recapitulating something we should have read but haven't."

This is so good that one can almost forgive Updike for getting Barthes' argument back to front: "Barthes insists . . . on the supremacy of 'readerly' (*lisible*) over 'writerly' (*scriptible*) literature." The reverse is actually the case.

That none of *The New Yorker*'s numerous readers apparently wrote in to correct Updike on this point (as they did to correct other errors of fact in other reviews, acknowledged by Updike in footnotes to this book) is an interesting indication of how far Updike and his editors are prepared to range outside subjects known and familiar to that audience. Updike's claim that book reviews "excuse us from reading the books themselves" may sound flippant, and even cynical, but in fact it states an important truth.

Nobody can read all the books that lay claim to the attention of an educated man or woman. If it was ever possible (perhaps up to the end of the 18th century), it certainly isn't any longer. And it is a pedantic fallacy, or hypocrisy, to claim that only first-hand knowledge is real knowledge. Most people's knowledge of Darwin, Marx and Freud, arguably the three most

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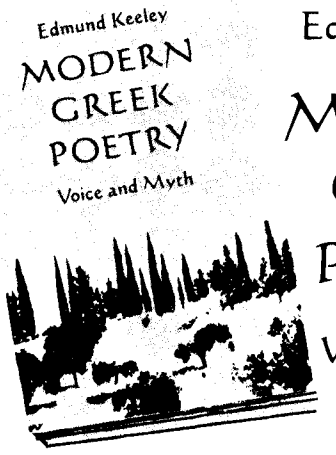
important thinkers of the modern era, is second- or third-hand. Hence the importance of the generalist reviewer, to monitor and disseminate information about the endless production of new ideas and artefacts, on behalf of the rest of us, who will never have the time, opportunity or will to encounter them all directly.

THE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES for this kind of reviewing, in addition to intelligence and a liberal education, are an eye for the illuminating quotation and an easy, eloquent prose style. Possessing these qualifications, Updike is able to convey a vivid sense of the "feel" of a book, which one trusts. Sometimes the review will make one wish to read the book oneself—I felt this, for instance, in the case of his sensitive account of Shusako Endo's *Silence*, a book whose subject—the martyrdom of Christian missionaries in 17th-century Japan—does not seem inherently inviting. At other times—as with Calvino's 763-page collection of Italian folk-tales, or Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Origin of Table Manners*, or Edmund Wilson's journals—I was happy to let Updike take the strain of wading through these substantial volumes, and gratefully to accept his summaries and samples.

It goes without saying that a reviewer writing for a general audience must not only communicate clearly, but must seize and hold the reader's attention—all too apt to stray to the advertisements on the side of the page, or to turn the page in search of something more diverting—by a personal grace of style. But it is easy to overdo this. The more cramped the space at a reviewer's disposal, the more strained and intrusive such stylistic self-assertion is apt to seem. British book reviewers, in particular, are addicted to the pun, which combines condensation with rhetorical self-display.

John Updike's "gift for metaphorical elaboration" is so well known that he can refer to it himself in those words and wonder whether it was not "permanently overdeveloped" by his apprenticeship on *The New Yorker*. Because his reviews are fairly leisurely in pace, and not so anxious to impress as his novels (the American writer, Updike shrewdly observes, "feels called upon to perform miracles or to cease performing"), his gift for coining metaphors and similes enlightens and enlivens without cloying, as it sometimes does in the fictional prose. Consider, for example, two passages which employ basically the same figurative vehicle—broken glass—but apply it differently, and with discriminating precision in each case. Muriel Spark's novels, he suggests, "linger in the mind as brilliant shards, decisive as a smashed glass is decisive, evidence of unmistakable power rather casually applied"; while Milan Kundera's prose "presents a surface like that of a shattered mirror, whose brightly mirroring fragments lie mixed with pieces of lustreless silvering."

Another common and much-abused reviewer's ploy to get attention is to overdramatise the evaluative message of the review, indulging in either extravagant praise or cruel abuse in order to generate a vicarious excitement or *Schadenfreude* in the reader. Again, Updike avoids this vice. His praise is measured, and rarely unqualified; his criticisms slyly sardonic rather than sneering (Handke is "the complete child of



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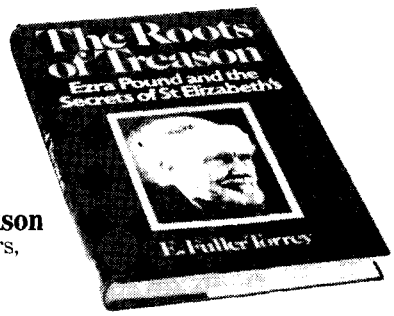

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modernism; Kierkegaard's absurdity, Sartre's nausea, was mother's milk to him"; the parting of two lovers in Gerthard Roth's *Winterreise* "occasions single sentence paragraphs, an infallible sign of philosophical distress").

If Updike's reviews have a weakness it is the lack of an argumentative structure—the discursive equivalent of a plot—which many of them are long enough to invite and make one expect. He rarely seems to have a thesis to argue, or to make the review an occasion for offering a new and coherent view of a subject or author. None of these reviews would stand up as independent essays in their own right, like the classic review-articles of Eliot, Leavis, Trilling, and Edmund Wilson. They are essentially *reports*, made up of paraphrase, quotation, discrete reflections, and *aperçus*; and they end rather suddenly, with somewhat empty rhetorical flourishes.

Reading *Hugging the Shore* gives one to think about book-reviewing as an institution, and its place in contemporary culture. An up-to-date study of this subject is greatly needed. In my own experience, most consumers of reviews are surprisingly ignorant of the process by which these discourses are generated and produced.

Many first-year students, I find, suppose that reviews are submitted, unsolicited, by those who write them. Few readers of ENCOUNTER need to be told that reviews are commissioned, usually with strict specifications as to length and deadline, by literary editors responsible for the book pages of newspapers and magazines. But how many know, for instance, that some reviewers are not paid *pro-rata* for each review, but receive a retainer (which may amount to a substantial salary) for supplying a regular review, on condition that they do not write for rival publications? Such retainers have provided a relatively secure base for many a literary career. Indeed, it is a fair assumption that most creative writers in Britain who do regular reviewing, whether as free-lances or on retainers, will earn more from this source, on a per-hour-of-work calculation, than they do from their novels and poems. This may not be true for a best-selling American writer like Updike, but his interesting admission in the Foreword to *Hugging the Shore*, that his monthly cheque from *The New Yorker* is almost exactly equivalent to his monthly alimony payment, suggests that it is not so far off the mark.

For the writer who is less obviously successful than Updike, reviewing as a source of regular income is a double-edged blessing. The writer cannot help resenting, occasionally, the time and energy taken away from his own work, to be spent on the work of others; and this resentment shows itself at times in irritable flashes of malice, or lazy, undiscriminating praise. Conversely, the reviewer who lavishes real compositional style and grace on his work is in some ways the most disinterested of literary perfectionists. Very few can hope, like John Updike, to see their reviews preserved between hard covers. Reviews are the butterflies of literary discourse, doomed to flutter brightly for a day or two, then to die and be forgotten.

Then there is the difficult and delicate matter of the reviewer's relationship with the other writers whom he may know and/or like and/or respect (or not), whom he may find himself reviewing and by whom he may himself have been reviewed in the past or expect to be reviewed in the future. Opening the book pages of our quality newspapers, the initiated reader will

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perceive in the apparently random conjunctions of reviewers and reviewed a network of connections invisible to the layman's eye. Reviewer A was at university with author B. Reviewer C has the same publisher or agent as author D. Reviewer E was once unfavourably reviewed by the present live-in lover of author F. And so on.

To draw attention to this fact is not to raise the old cry of a London literary mafia, a metropolitan conspiracy to control the literary market-place through internecine gang-warfare and the exclusion of new talent. On the whole one sees relatively few examples of flagrantly self-interested flattery or the settling of scores in today's book-reviewing. The pulled punch, the deliberately planted "puff" in an otherwise lukewarm review, are more common. Given the intense centralisation and concentration of British literary life, such temptations to compromise are inevitable, and I couldn't claim to be totally blameless myself in this respect. A literary world that was totally disinfected, either by agreement or by decree, from such possible conflicts of interest would, in any case, be a very dull one. But some demystification of the whole machinery of book-reviewing would be healthy. What, for instance, about the role of literary editors, those *éminences grises* of the reviewing world, who choose the books to be reviewed, and match book to reviewer? The increasing commercialisation of literary publishing (that is, the more intense and systematic application of accounting criteria to editorial policy, a development Updike comments caustically on more than once in his book) has correspondingly increased the power of, and pressures on, these men and women.

How far good reviews help, and bad reviews hinder, the sales of books is a subject of constant debate and disagreement in the publishing trade; but few would dispute that to be reviewed at all is better than to be ignored. Reviewing is a form of free advertisement, not in the sense of necessarily recommending the product, but of informing the potential buyer of its existence. Then there is the unquantifiable but crucial matter of the author's ego. It is difficult to retain faith in your work if the only feedback you get is from your friends and family. With the current overproduction of books of academic literary criticism, combined with the shrinking space for, and interest in, reviewing such books in newspapers and magazines, it is now quite common for very worthy books of this kind to be published and reviewed only, if at all, a year or two later, in those specialist academic journals whose bound volumes creak when you open them, like the doors of some seldom visited church.

Updike is absolutely right: the Darwinian struggle for survival which governs literary discourse in an age not only of mechanical, but also of electronic reproduction, makes reviewing a cultural institution of crucial importance. Arguably, the function of reviewing, in *informing* ourselves of what is happening, is now more important than the evaluative function which has traditionally been seen as its *raison d'être*. Ironically, it is of the nature of reviews to add to the problem they address themselves to. Books breed like rabbits. This review of a book of reviews may one day appear in a book of my own, which will in turn be reviewed, and so on *ad infinitum*. The world does not need these books, but we need to write them. As Updike says to his self-created interrogator, Henry Bech, who taxes him on this point: "Print is guilt. Life is guilt. I believe it."

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MEMOIR

Koestler the Militant

A Last Tribute—By LEO VALIANI

I FIRST MET ARTHUR KOESTLER in the early days of October 1939 in the Roland Garros tennis stadium in Paris. We had been arrested a month after the start of the *drôle de guerre*, the "phoney war", as foreigners coming from countries which were still neutral but might become enemies (Hungary in his case, Italy in mine), and who, as Communists or ex-Communists, were suspected of being a danger to the security of France, now involved in the Second World War.

As a matter of fact we were both implacable enemies of Nazi Germany, and we showed it; but that was of no importance for the French police at that time. They had the job of interning a certain number of "undesirable foreigners" so as to prevent the formation in France of Hitlerite or Stalinist fifth columns in connection with the brutal partition of Poland (the Hitler-Stalin pact was at its height); and foreigners with a revolutionary political past were the perfect target to that end.

Koestler, after being a brilliant journalist, had made his name as a fine writer with his *Spanish Testament*. I was, and still am, a political journalist and have also become concerned with political and economic history. I lack the artistic gifts to describe as well as he has done our weeks in the Roland Garros and the subsequent months in the concentration camp at Vernet in the department of Ariège, some 700 metres up near the Pyrenees. I would therefore refer anyone who wants to know more about it to that splendid book *Scum of the Earth*. In it, Koestler mentions me, calling me Mario. In the preface to the second English edition (1955), he specifies that Mario's name was Leo Valiani (through a typographical error the name appears as Leo Valliani), and says he regarded me as his "closest friend." I cannot deny that I was proud of his friendship, and this mention pleased me (it is always *important* to be cited in a good book).

In political life, as in life in general, the trivial is mixed up with the tragic. On this mixture Koestler's writings contain some remarkably acute observations. He began to expound them to me in the Roland Garros stadium, where a great many of us were packed together in a confined space like chickens in a cage, and then in the camp at Vernet, in one of the wooden huts where we slept side by side.

Our beds consisted of straw, full of fleas, scattered on the bare floor of the hut. Koestler and I, however, each had a sleeping-bag, his sent by his girl friend, Daphne, a beautiful and intelligent English sculptress who later translated his *Darkness at Noon*. I had left behind a penniless wife nearly nine months pregnant—indeed my son was born while I was in Roland Garros—and so mine came from my close friend Franco Venturi, now famous as the historian of Russian populism and of the European and Italian 18th century.

So I used to say we were privileged because of the sleeping-bags and because we slept in huts and not in the open. The previous winter, the Spanish republican fighters, forced to take refuge in France after their defeat, had slept on the bare ground in the Vernet camp, in a temperature which for months was below zero. The huts had been built by them from trees they cut down the following spring and summer.

Koestler did not share my view that we were *privilegiati*. According to him we were persecuted unfortunates, and if we hadn't been persecuted unfortunates we should have remained at liberty and of our own free will would have been able to decide whether or not to enrol against Hitler in the French Foreign Legion. As a matter of fact, and I told Koestler so, on the first day of the War I had presented myself in Paris at the headquarters of the Foreign Legion asking to be enrolled. With some surprise, and with sardonic satisfaction, I observed when I put my name down on the list of candidates for enrolment that

ARTHUR KOESTLER *died (by his own hand) in London just over a year ago at the age of 77. These two personal memoirs—by Leo Valiani and Elizabeth Jane Howard—supplement "The Life & Death of Arthur Koestler" which we published in 1983, in the July-August and September-October issues.*

LEO VALIANI *is a distinguished Italian historian who writes regularly for the "Corriere della Sera" in Milan. He was made a lifetime Senator of the Republic for his war-time efforts in the struggle against Mussolini's Fascist régime. His delayed memoir of Arthur Koestler as "a militant", in prison and out, was intended, of course, for our Koestler "anthology."*

ELIZABETH JANE HOWARD *is an English novelist, television playwright, and critic. Her books include "After Julius" (1965), "Something in Disguise" (1969, TV series 1982), and "Getting It Right" (Hamish Hamilton, 1982).*

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above my signature was that of my friend Luigi Longo, one of the leaders of the Italian Communist Party (and a former Inspector-General in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War). Unlike me, Longo adhered faithfully to the general line of the Communist International, which included unconditional approval of the Hitler-Stalin pact; but his ingrained anti-Fascism evidently prevailed at the crucial moment, without any weakening of his wish to remain in the Communist Party, which he considered to be his whole life.

Given this and other precedents in his career, I was not surprised when years later, in 1968, Luigi Longo, in the name of the Italian Communist Party, condemned the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. His choice in 1939, dictated by an impulse of conscience, was of course as useless as my own. I had decided to leave the Communist Party (which I had entered, underground, some ten years earlier) but only after being sent to fight and perhaps die at the front (like my fellow-journalist, and a fellow-writer of Koestler's, Paul Nizan) or in the concentration camps which held thousands of Communists from different countries who were faithful to Stalin. I wanted to dissociate myself from Stalinism—but not in order to acquire the possibility of remaining at liberty rather than being interned.

For all these reasons Koestler regarded me as a masochist. He was mistaken. He himself had left the German Communist Party (which he had joined in Berlin a year or two before Hitler came to power) in 1938, after the execution of Bukharin. But this did not ensure for him, any more than my position did for me, liberty in a France that had become at once anti-Nazi and anti-Communist.

His exit from the Communist Party had come about publicly, before the War, but his letter of resignation (he showed me a copy of it at Roland Garros) ended with the ritual phrase for a Communist of that time: "*Es lebe die Sowjetunion!* (Long live the Soviet Union!)." This peroration was completely in the style of Bukharin. Bukharin once came to Paris for a conference (in the spring of 1936) and was sought out by Rosa Luxemburg's former secretary, the Polish ex-Communist Fanny Jezierska. She had been expelled from the Party in 1929 because she and other companions had opposed Stalinist theory and practice; she now wanted to advise Bukharin (himself formerly one of the main opponents of Stalin) not to return to Russia. Bukharin answered that he felt himself destined to die for the Soviet revolution, and he should, rather, be exhorting her to return to the Party.

THIS STORY was told me by Jezierska herself; and I repeated it to Koestler. At that time Koestler, in any case, would no longer have written that loyal endorsement. In the year since he had left the Party he had read much, had reflected and come to the conclusion that the Soviet power had by then become a reactionary, tyrannical, detestable régime, not only because of the macabre show trial of Bukharin and others of the Leninist old guard; but also because of its whole dictatorial and totalitarian structure. As for myself, I had not yet reached this conclusion —my divergences concerned the persecution of non-Stalinist Communists and the Hitler-Stalin Pact, and because of this I wanted to leave the Party and did so. Koestler's arguments appeared persuasive; but it took some time to convince me completely.

KOESTLER HAD WITH HIM, already three-quarters written, the German manuscript of *Darkness at Noon*. I was the first person to read it. Thanks to the captain of the *Deuxième Bureau* who had the job of censoring the Vernet prisoners' letters and who was a rather decent intellectual, Koestler was exempted from manual labour (consisting of physically taxing duties). Thus he had time to finish the book before his release after four months of internment. He later revised and even recast it, but he had essentially finished it at Vernet. He made use of the few sources he had at that time, in particular the articles which one of the GPU leaders, General Walther Krivitsky, who had fled to the West in 1937 or '38, had published in a little paper issued by *émigré* Russians. (I don't remember whether it was the Mensheviks or the Trotskyists.) Krivitsky later published his memoirs, and was found mysteriously hanged in a room in New York.[1]

Koestler and I had in common not only our stay in the internment camp (I was there longer than he, indeed for a whole year before I managed to escape) and the fact that we had been Communist journalists. We were also both Jews; both atheists; and we talked to each other in Hungarian. Koestler, after all, was born in Budapest. The last time I saw him, in 1971 in London where I had gone to correct the proofs of the English edition of my book *The End of Austria-Hungary*, he spoke to me again of his love for his native land.

As for myself, I was born in February 1909 in Fiume, an ethnically Italian town which then belonged, as *corpus separatum*, to Hungary. I learned Hungarian, and was often in Budapest. I can remember being particularly enthusiastic about the great popular festival of 1 May 1919, when Budapest came out with red flags. Koestler, who was some years older than I, was also present at this great popular manifestation.

All this would naturally be a very minor childhood recollection but for the relationship between "Jewishness" and Communism. Today, with the violent anti-Zionism (often verging on and merging with anti-Semitism) of the Soviet Union and Communist Parties almost everywhere in the world, it may seem incredible, but in 1919 and the following years in Central and Eastern Europe Jews were widely regarded as the accomplices of Communism or even as its nerve-centre. Lenin, Bukharin and Stalin were not Jews; but Trotsky, Sverdlov,

[1] Krivitsky figures in a moving book, *Our Own People*, by Elisabeth Poretsky, the widow of his friend and companion in the *GPU*, Ignaz Reiss. Reiss had also broken with the Stalinist organisation in 1937 following the first Moscow show trials, and had wanted to join Trotsky's Fourth International but was killed by Stalin's hired assassins in Switzerland: "*Habent sua fata libelli.*"

The director of the Vienna State Archives, Rudolf Neck, told me some years ago how he accompanied Chancellor Kreisky to Moscow. Among other things they visited the great library that bears the name of Lenin; and Kreisky, in order to verify the extent of Soviet censorship, asked if they had *Darkness at Noon*. They brought him a copy. Its worn condition testified to its many readers. True, they must have been privileged people, granted access to forbidden works; but at least there were a lot of them.

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Zinoviev, Kamenev and most of the leaders of Soviet Communism were. Béla Kun and most of the People's Commissars in "Red Hungary" were Jews. So too were several socialist and radical ministers in the preceding democratic republican government, even though its head, Count Károlyi, came of an aristocratic and ancient Magyar family.

A certain number of Jews—at first only a few, except in Russia and Poland—reacted to anti-Semitism with Zionism. Koestler was one of them, and went as a very young man to Palestine. Then he further reacted, as did a considerable number of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe, by becoming a Communist too. Zionism did not interest me then, although my maternal grandmother, Caterina Herzl, who came from Zemun, near Belgrade, was a second cousin of Theodor Herzl. She had never known him, because Theodor's parents moved to Budapest before his birth. I became an anti-Fascist because I was inspired by socialist sentiments, vague at first but gradually becoming more definite. Anti-Fascism led me to Communism. But I cannot rule out that my Jewish origins also predisposed me to it.

I often talked about this with Koestler who had experienced anti-Semitism at close quarters and over a long period, in Budapest, Vienna and Berlin. Naturally, as a good Hungarian patriot, he denied that it was a phenomenon of Hungarian origin; it had been imported from Germany, which already in the Middle Ages had known terrible and tragic persecutions of the Jews, poetically re-evoked by Heine, and also from the Russia of the pogroms. He told me that in 1933 the Hungarian police, in the service of an officially anti-Semitic and anti-Communist régime, having questioned him on his return from a journey to Moscow expressed their pride and satisfaction at the high position which a Hungarian—even though a Communist and a Jew: the ill-fated Béla Kun, in fact—occupied (as they believed) in Soviet Russia.

NATURALLY, WE TALKED MORE ABOUT Communism than about such matters, and in particular we talked of what the Spanish war had meant—both of us had been there as journalists in the early stages. At Vernet there were a great many volunteers from the Spanish International Brigade. There was Luigi Longo himself, in another sector (the concentration camp was divided into three sectors separated by wire fences), and in our sector there were Gustav Regler and Ludwig Renn, German anti-Nazi writers who had also held important positions in the International Brigade. Renn stopped speaking to us and refused even to greet us when he learnt that we were critical of Stalin. Regler, on the other hand, had himself become an anti-Stalinist. There was also a Communist Hungarian (not Jewish) writer—Aladar Tamas, a Stalinist, who later published his memoirs in Communist Hungary. At that time he was not dogmatic, indeed verged on the critical, so that he was willing to discuss things with Koestler and me, his companions in the hut.

The problem that passionately interested us was whether all the Communist Parties must be regarded as lost for ever. Koestler thought they were irremediably lost. I did not exclude that the Italian Communist Party might well regenerate itself in the struggle for the overthrow of Fascism. Both of us were right to a certain extent. Koestler, anyway, was a good prophet when, the day after the Soviet invasion of Finland, he predicted to me that the Red Army, decapitated in the purges of 1937–38, would suffer bitter defeats.

I MUST SAY AGAIN that tragedy is always mixed with trivia. At Vernet they gave us very little to eat, and even if one did have money (Koestler had a little), there was nothing very much to be bought. The mountain air sharpened our appetites, and in the evenings, tormented by hunger, Koestler would invent the menu of what we would eat for dinner at the *Belle Aurore* restaurant when we were free again in Paris. He detailed the wines, the entrée, the main dish, but when he came to the cheese he always paused for thought. "The cheese", he would say, "is very important, and it needs careful reflection." In 1946, when we were both in Paris, I tried to get him to come with me to the *Belle Aurore*, but to no avail, and now I don't even know whether that once famous restaurant still exists. Celebrity (and the consequent comfortable circumstances) did not make Koestler an epicurean but turned him, I thought, rather towards austerity. We frequented ordinary French bistros; and when he came to Italy a good many times between 1948 and 1955 we just went to the usual *trattorie*. It was only in 1971, in London, that we finally ate our *de luxe* menu. Perhaps it was a reaction against the years of Labour's austerity. Unfortunately I don't remember what cheese we ate.

Koestler, unlike me—I was resigned to spending some time in Vernet—was restlessly trying to convince the French authorities that they should set us free. In the end he was indeed liberated—as once before, from Franco's prison in Spain—with the help of British intervention (due to the English newspapers for which he had been writing, and the efforts of his English wife).

I saw Koestler and Daphne again, and stayed in their house in London for ten days in August 1943. I had escaped from Vernet—thanks to the help of my friends in *Giustizia e Libertà*, Franco Venturi (to whom in Paris Koestler, liberated in January 1940, had brought news of me) and Aldo Garosci, also a well-known historian. I then had to leave France to avoid being handed over to the Italian Fascist authorities who were demanding my extradition together with that of other *émigrés*. Garosci fled to New York, helped by the future Italian Ambassador to Washington, Alberto Tarchiani, but a year later, together with other anti-Fascists in *Giustizia e Libertà*, we returned to Italy with the help of the British Special Operations Executive. We had been put in touch with them by Emilio Lussu, head of *Giustizia e Libertà*, and his brother-in-law Max Salvadori, who, having an English mother, had enlisted in the British Armed Forces.

SO IN August 1943 we found ourselves in London on the way to Italy. Military defeats had caused the King to get rid of Mussolini and entrust the government to Marshal Badoglio who (secretly, but predictably) asked the British and Americans for an armistice. We were sure that immediately after the armistice, the German army would invade and occupy

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Remembering

I KNEW *Arthur for a comparatively short time—less than a year it must have been—but during that period I saw a great deal of him. It was some time in the mid-1950s; I can only date the interlude by the books we were writing: I was finishing a novel called "The Long View", and he had begun writing his book about Kepler.*

I met him at a party, and such was my ignorance of his appearance that we talked for some time before he realised that I did not know who he was. This is what he looked like to me. He was shortish, not so tall as I, broad-shouldered, rather barrel-chested, with muscular well-shaped hands, and small feet. He moved lightly—even when he charged about, it was neatly done. He wore conservative clothes; a dark suit, an unremarkable tie. He had a good head; large, a broad and rather low brow with the thick brindled hair tidily parted and combed in a way that reminded me of old-fashioned schoolboys. Habitual expressions were impatient curiosity, ageless exuberance, and a kind of conspiratorial cynicism. I can't describe this last better, but I noticed it again and again: it is connected with having a great sense of amusement or fun, but there always being something wry about it which you were invited to share. But the chief first impression—born out when I knew him better—was one of terrific energy, continuous, crackling, almost irritable energy; indeed, he often made other people seem anaemic, flaccid, intellectual cud-chewers in comparison. Like all high-powered engines, he used up fuel. I remember him saying: "Feed me quickly—before I lose my temper!" and my nervously posting slices of salami into his mouth.

WHY, I WONDER, **do we instinctively expect people to be all of a piece? Arthur presented the—probably not at all unusual—pack of contradictions. He was an idealist and he was a cynic: he could be very arrogant, but had areas of no confidence and also of humility. He was a much-travelled, experienced, and mature man, and sometimes a noble little goblin, full of glee and childish jokes and ideas. He was generous, and could be infinitely kind, but he was also a bully. He had all his life the most active, open and enquiring mind; he was also in some way intensely conservative—particularly in his view of what constituted proper social behaviour: a part of him was attracted to the idea of family life and domesticity, but the slightest practice of either bored, irritated and ultimately appalled him. But he also had several virtues that were pure, so to speak—uncontested by any disparate parts of his nature. He was entirely brave; had courage on every level, physical, moral and spiritual, and he was also the most honourable man—with many enduring loyalties. His capacity for indignation—that invaluable ingredient for making things happen—remained with him always.**

Anecdotes about some of this. . . . I remember in Gamages where we had gone to buy some equipment for the canoe he had just acquired. We were passing through the garden-furniture department when he spied a clutch of painted gnomes—the kind with white beards and red caps who sit fishing, or grinning cross-legged on a concrete toadstool.

"Gnomes!" he cried. "I must have them! Think how beautiful it would be to put them on my roof-terrace: people will come for drinks and find the whole terrace full of gnomes. They are really very nice—let us buy them all at once!" I don't know what would have happened if I had called his bluff—I don't even know if it *was* a bluff—but since he allowed himself to be persuaded not to buy a single gnome, it probably was.

The bully came out one wet Saturday morning when he decided to rehang all the pictures in his drawing-room. I suppose there were really only eight or nine pictures involved, and I thought that this ploy would last us until lunch-time. Twenty-four hours later, with very brief interludes for food and sleep, I thought it would never end. Holding pictures up against a wall—higher, lower; two inches to the right; no, take it back to where it was—is debilitating. I was speechless, and aching with fatigue and being told that it was all my fault that we had accomplished so little.

Another, from my point of view, far more constructive form of bullying was when he locked me in a freezing room for my morning stint on my novel. He told me that I was a better writer than he had expected, and added, rather surprisingly, that my writing seemed to him to be a cross between Evelyn Waugh and Nancy Mitford, and provided therefore a useful link. It is never wise to be too choosey about either flattery or encouragement, and I accepted this and have wondered about it ever since. Anyway, I would be let out at one o'clock to go and have a warming drink with Henry York and Dig, his wife. There came a wonderful day when he told me to stop writing my novel, pointing out that I had reached the end without realising it, and he was right, and it was a tremendous relief.

THE GENEROSITY, *the kindness. . . . I remember that people would sometimes turn up—out of the blue—who had escaped from some labour camp or prison in Russia, and how, although he had a very strict work-schedule, he would drop everything and talk with them privately for hours. He once told me that he always knew if they were* bona fide, *because they would call him "thou" rather than "you"—***thou** *being how those prisoners always addressed one another. He gave money, time, encouragement and himself with unselfconscious warmth. (I think I ought to put in here that Arthur always said that he invented the term "the Iron Curtain." I have no idea whether this is so, but only that if he said he had invented it, he certainly believed that he had.)*

Arthur had a great sense of hierarchy, and his conservative social attitudes would come out there. He would lecture me for hours before we went to meet people, to make sure that I would not put my foot in it, or even put it too far forward. He was something of an intellectual snob, and although he recognised that women could be intelligent and creative, in the hierarchy they invariably came second to men. I was not only a woman, I was a *young* woman, so on two counts he suffered from qualms that I might not know my place (and I'm sorry to say that from this point of view I often didn't). But I remember once that it was thought (by him) proper that he should meet my mother, whom he then invited to tea—a meal he never had—and he was tremendously nervous about whether she would approve of him or not.

A NERVE-WRACKING ILLUSION *that Arthur suffered from (in those days) was that if he was driving when extremely drunk, it would be perfectly all right provided he drove slowly enough. "Oh darling—I* **am so—drunk***", he'd say, as we weaved our way at about four miles an hour ricocheting in slow motion from side to side or kerb to kerb of the Brompton Road. "But they will never notice, because I am driving with so much care. Drunk people are very stupid—they always drive too fast. . . ." Drink was always a volatile business with him, and he made continuous, often heroic efforts to ration himself—always successful when he was working—it was the odd party that threw him, when he would drink from gaiety or boredom, whichever the company induced.*

THE LAST TIME I saw Arthur was just about two years ago, when I went to supper with him and Cynthia. He was very low, and said that he felt depressed. His illness made him very tired—everything was an effort, so I didn't stay late. I left, very much moved by them: by Arthur's unassailable dignity, and by Cynthia's complete love for him: I have never met or seen anyone who loved so well.

The last time I heard from him was when he rang up a few weeks before his death and said: "Janey! Old friends—old friends may take this liberty! Would you be able to come to supper next Sunday? One other old friend is coming, so it is possible to ask you at such short notice. . . ." But I had agreed to do something else and felt that I had to refuse—and I shall regret that for the rest of my life.

Elizabeth Jane Howard

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most of Italy and we wanted to join the hoped-for Resistance against them.

Koestler was doubtful about the usefulness of our plans, not with regard to the struggle against the Nazis, which he approved, but concerning the possibilities of realising the ideals of "liberal socialism" which *Giustizia e Libertà* professed and which were taken over by the Action Party in 1943–45. In his view, Italy would be treated as a conquered country, and punished (which he deplored but thought inevitable); and the whole of Europe would be divided into two spheres of influence, American and Soviet. The nations included in the American sphere would consider themselves fortunate. The margin of autonomy in the countries of the old continent, and especially in Italy, would be minimal. But one day he quoted a Hungarian saying (by the well-known playwright Ferenc Molnár): "The smallest candle teaches you that to get a little gleam it's worth lighting it and keeping it burning to the end. . . ." I pointed out to him that this justified our plans. Not only did he then approve them but he also gave me sufficient money to enable me to live on my own in Italy. So I went off, and became one of the *militanti*, one of the leaders of the Italian Resistance in Milan. By the time I saw Koestler again, in 1946 in Paris where I had gone for the Peace Conference, I was a deputy in the Italian Constituent Assembly. I could not fail to recognise that, if not with regard to the whole of the Italian question (for Italy, in the meantime, had indeed become a democratic Republic), then at least as to a large part of it, and certainly with regard to the whole European question, Koestler had been far-sighted.

But the story remains of that small burning candle. Koestler's books have been a candle in the darkness, and will continue to diffuse their light.

AUTHORS

Shusaku Endo is Japan's leading living novelist. Six of his novels have appeared in English translation, including what is widely held to be his masterpiece, *Silence*. "Fuda-no-Tsuji" comes from a collection of Endo's short stories, *Stained Glass Elegies*, which Peter Owen is publishing in September.

Brian Crozier is the founder and first director (1970–79) of the Institute for the Study of Conflict in London. He is the author of biographies of Franco, de Gaulle, and Chiang Kai-shek, and co-author of *This War Called Peace*, just published by Sherwood Press.

Stephen de Mowbray, educated at Winchester College and New College, Oxford, served during World War I in the Fleet Air Arm. In 1950 he joined the British Diplomatic Service, his overseas posts including (1964–68) a tour in Washington D.C. Since his retirement in 1979, he has assisted in editing Anatoliy Golitsyn's *New Lies for Old*.

Leopold Labedz, editor of *Survey* magazine in London, is the editor, among other works, of *International Communism after Khrushchev* (1965), *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record* (1972), and *Encounters with Kennan* (Frank Cass, 1979). Among his previous contributions to ENCOUNTER are "The Spectre of Yalta" (December 1981) and "False Dilemmas, Real Alternatives" (December 1980). In the first part of his article on George Orwell, which appeared in the June issue, the date of publication of *Homage to Catalonia* and of *The Short Course of Party History* should have been given in both cases as 1938.

Blake Morrison is the author of *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford University Press, 1980), and co-editor of *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (1982). His first book of poems, *Dark Glasses*, will be published in October by Chatto & Windus.

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph* in London, and author of *The Senate of Lilliput* (Faber, 1983).

Bernard Bergonzi, Professor of English at the University of Warwick, is the author, among other works, of *Reading the Thirties* (1978), *The Situation of the Novel* (1979), and *Heroes' Twilight* (1980), all published by Macmillan Press. His novel *The Roman Persuasion* was published in 1981 by Weidenfeld.

Alan Jenkins is on the staff of *The Times Literary Supplement*. His previous articles in ENCOUNTER include studies of modern and post-modern poetry (August 1982, July 1981), and an essay on Wyndham Lewis (February 1984).

Barry Windeatt is Fellow and Tutor, and Director of Studies in English, at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. His study of *Chaucer's Dream Poetry* was published by D. S. Brewer in 1982, and this spring Longman have brought out *Troilus and Criseyde*, his new edition of "The Book of Troilus."

David Lodge, Professor of Modern English Literature at the University of Birmingham, is the author of *The Language of Fiction* (n.e. Routledge, 1984), *Working with Structuralism* (1981), and *The Modes of Modern Writing* (1977). His latest novel, *Small World*, was published this spring by Secker & Warburg.

Eric Griffiths is a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, where he teaches English. He is working on a study of the relations between the written word and the speaking voice.

THE NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of ENCOUNTER, dated September-October, will appear on 5 September. With the November issue we shall revert to our normal publishing programme (i.e. the November issue will be published on 20 October).

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INTERVIEW

In the Shadow of Northern Lights

A Conversation with the Danish novelist, Henrik Stangerup

THE SITUATION of the Western writer has been marked everywhere by a sense of provincial isolation. Surely this must be even more debilitating for a writer from a small country, which must inevitably seem even more of a regional backwater?

STANGERUP: One has to remind oneself, but there once was a time when Scandinavian culture was a cosmopolitan culture. The tiny countries of Denmark, Norway, Sweden (and Finland) created art of a special quality. Perhaps it all started with Kierkegaard, surely the greatest "new" philosopher not only of his own time but also of ours; and it appeared to come to an end in the time between the two World Wars. There are some who have grandiosely spoken of the "Scandinavian renaissance." Even today, when one speaks of Scandinavian art and philosophy and music out in the "big" world, all the names mentioned are from the 19th and the early 20th century. Besides Kierkegaard, there are Andersen, Ibsen, Strindberg, Nielsen, Herman Bang, Henrik Pontoppidan, Knut Hamsun, Sigrid Undset, Selma Lagerlöf, Georg Brandes, Jean Sibelius, Edvard Munch—the list of Scandinavians of world-wide renown is long. Yet there exists no historical work, such as those innumerable works on French movements and Viennese circles, showing just how significant the Scandinavian influence was for the major cultures—German, Anglo-American, French, Russian. It could be that we are running out of eager young scholars with time and resources.

HENRIK STANGERUP *is perhaps the best known of a younger generation of Scandinavian novelists. He lives outside Copenhagen, has also written and directed a number of films, and his novel "The Man Who Wanted to be Guilty" was translated into French, German, and English. His new novel, "The Road to Lagoa Santa" —a Conradian tale of a Danish naturalist in Brazil, based on the mystery of Dr P. W. Lund (who was in touch with Darwin and was a cousin of Kierkegaard) and his disappearance into the "heart of darkness"—has just been published by Marion Boyars in London and New York. The text of this interview was prepared by Barbara Bluestone, Stangerup's translator.*

—This almost sounds as if you were trying to compensate for the aridities of the present by magnifying the glories of the past.

STANGERUP: No, I would be prepared to argue that out of Kierkegaard evolved the existentialist philosophy of the 20th century, from Heidegger to Sartre and Gabriel Marcel. Out of Kierkegaard evolved Ibsen (who understood him better than the philosophers), and out of Ibsen grew the naturalistic drama, the "*drame engagé*" of the 20th century, from Shaw to O'Neill, Wesker, and Osborne. And modern absurdist drama, from Ionesco and Beckett to Pinter, is utterly inconceivable without Strindberg. Out of Hamsun (if we tactfully ignore his unforgivable Nazi sentiments) grew a whole series of the finest 20th-century "nervous" *I*-novelists: first and foremost Henry Miller. The works of Thomas Mann, who spoke of the North as "a spiritual way of life", are inconceivable without the great Scandinavian novel from the turn-of-the-century. Rilke's favourite author was J. P. Jacobsen, and one of Kafka's was Kierkegaard. Painting, science, and political theory—strand after strand of world civilisation can be traced back to us, back to the period of approximately 100 years during which a whole group of brilliant Scandinavians, often from impoverished backgrounds (for we have no tradition of aristocratic privilege and of élite schools such as Eton or the Rue d'Ulm in Paris) made an impact on the world—one as profound, I venture to think, as the Italians of the Renaissance, the French of the Enlightenment, the Germany of the Romantic period, and the Americans of our day's Modernism.

What linked these Scandinavians was *existentialism*, in the deepest sense of the word, not the kind which is theorised about in Freiburg, or on the Left Bank, but the kind which is lived: an impassioned existentialism, a deep belief that the potential of the individual is of the utmost importance . . . and it was linked, of course, with our inherent Nordic melancholy and fatalism. The poor proletarian boy (as Hans Christian Andersen tells, in his tale "Numbskull Jack"), this Nordic individualist and existentialist, rides straight up to the princess and wins her heart by giving her a wooden shoe filled with mud. It was a gesture which says, "You can like me or not, as you please. I don't have to come with fancy gifts, to be clad in silk, or have the education of a mandarin. I'm good enough as I am—I'm me!" It is this same individual, his greatness and despair, for whom Kierkegaard waged a life-long struggle against German systematic thinking which maintained that you

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must pass through all stages, all rooms in the haunted castle, in an exhausting, dispiriting search for the truth—which is, indeed, nothing other than one's own self.

What Scandinavian would ever dream of declaring, as one German metaphysician did, that a personal conscience is an evil? It was a notion which enraged Kierkegaard so deeply that his rage inspired the angry young man Henrik Ibsen. In his strongly Kierkegaardian play *An Enemy of the People*, that very same personal conscience is claimed to be the most valuable of all, and therefore it doesn't matter whether you are "conservative", "liberal" or "socialist", or—as is most natural for the Scandinavian temperament—a combination of all three. As *that* kind of "enemy of the people", Orwell said (most Nordically), he was a liberal by temperament and a socialist by sentiment.

—Have the "cultural" factors been independent forces, then? Or do you link them with the political course of events?

STANGERUP: Parallel with the "Scandinavian renaissance", and out of it, grew a political revival which in an astonishingly short time transformed the Scandinavian countries. They had been inferior, backward (and, in the case of Sweden, hunger-stricken) agrarian societies; they became modern democratic industrial societies which miraculously were able to avoid the dangers of extreme Left and Right: Communism, Fascism, Nazism. The finest civic achievement with which this democracy can be credited was the way in which the Danish population naturally acted to save "our Jews" during the German Occupation—not because of any philo-Semitism but because of our Orwellian "common decency", a decency whose roots extend back to the beginning of the 19th century when leading Danish writers lashed out against anti-Semitism and strongly criticised the cruelties of the Russian pogroms. In general, the Danish Romantic movement was devoid of the "philosophical" anti-Semitism which was the cancer of both the reactionary and the revolutionary brands of German romanticism. Aside from Hamsun, we in Scandinavia have no tradition of intellectual anti-Semitism *à la* Fichte and Wagner. For a Scandinavian, I may say, it is incomprehensible that many French, German, and—unfortunately—also English authors and "thinkers" have used so much energy in opposing, by turns, the Jew *an sich* and the Jew *in uns*.

IS THIS ALL PAST, *or present, or both? Or are you saying that in respect of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (to use T. S. Eliot's phrase), the Scandinavian writer has both political and cultural resources from which to derive a sense of history and a vital contemporaneity?*

STANGERUP: Well, let me put it in rather more modest and conventional terms, such as "pride" or "awareness" or "roots." Democratic (without any tradition of revolution, of intellectual fanaticism, the idea of some *Weltgeist* or of Romantic racism), "bourgeois" (in the best sense of the word, meaning support for a liberal *enlightenment*) Scandinavians from the end of the last century and up to the mid-1960s created a unique *political culture* which mediated humanely between old-fashioned capitalism's *Them* and *Us*, and in which (as our Danish phrase goes) "few have too much and fewer too little." And let it be said, by one who is not a party member, that it was the Social Democrats who were the *primus motor*, a Social Democratic party which never deteriorated, as much of the European Left has, into aiming for an economic state of siege, but which founded its solidarity upon the policy of stimulating business enterprise. Industry meant industriousness: working well and to good purpose. Without a baked cake, there's nothing to share out. The 1950s were the golden decade of this political culture which understood how to combine the best elements of conservatism (a *natural* pessimism as against belief in the innate goodness of man) with the best of liberalism (a *natural* desire to create one's own life, independent of feudal bonds) and the best of socialism (that *naturally* one cannot conceivably be smugly content with one's personal well-being while one's neighbour is in need).

This is, in my view, the very society to which Leszek Kolakowski pledges himself in his credo "How to be a Conservative-Liberal Socialist."[1] A society which believes that improving material conditions may not make man good, but perhaps a little bit better. A society which knows that within us all there dwells a beast, and that this beast can be, if not tamed, at least kept under control by a set of democratic rules-of-play. It calls for an effectively constitutional legal system and also for a juridical ethos which calls murder by its real name, and not (as is fashionable in Denmark today) "violence resulting in death", and in which a murderer is judged by judges and not (as is seriously being considered in Sweden) by psychiatrists employed by the State to exonerate man of responsibility for his own deeds.

A society, in other words, founded upon the fundamental Western idea which is our only real spiritual bulwark against what Jean-François Revel called "the totalitarian temptation": that man possesses a free will which he must live up to and be responsible for. The solidarity of human fellowship must also be rooted in this individual free-will if it is not to be a straitjacket forced upon us by Big Brother.

—You speak of pride, but there is an undertone in your remarks which suggests the pride that goeth before a fall.

STANGERUP: I am afraid that in the 1960s we abandoned (though to a lesser degree in the still very religious Norway) certain conservative virtues and "ligatures" (in Ralf Dahrendorf's phrase). To cries of hurrah and out-with-the-old-rubbish, we committed ourselves to limitless progress all across the board, with a sudden burst of insatiable egalitarian envy . . . and even greed.

The caution of the pragmatic 1950s was abandoned. All at once the Scandinavian societies were deemed to be wealthy beyond the dreams of Midas (although we in Denmark had borrowed most of our money from abroad). Now the important thing was not just to fix a little here and repair a little there, not to experiment bravely (as we so often did, creatively, in the

[1] Leszek Kolakowski, "How to be a Conservative-Liberal Socialist", ENCOUNTER, October 1978.

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past) with a new school here and a new college there—no, *all* educational establishments were to be changed and their revised curricula were to be faultlessly progressive and forward-looking[2] as our children played merrily in functionalist palaces of Scandinavian design with well-sealed picture-windows. No one would be able to hide, just as Thomas More once warned in his *Utopia*. The idea of "the New Man", Orwell's horror, reared its head from the mothballs where it had been put when the bearded old German Social Democrats were Marxian and revolutionary. Everyone was to work for the State; those who were sexually unhappy were to be made happy by advanced sexology (and even a daringly new porno-therapy). Everything was to be permitted (as Dostoevsky had predicted), but at the same time every "perversion" or "introversion" was to be cured by Health Service psychiatrists. The goal was total—for it was to be all meticulously *planned*. Mother State would watch over us and make sure that no one took Nordic eccentrics of the past too seriously: Søren Kierkegaard, that "religious" relic of a bygone age, or Henrik Ibsen's dour dissidence.

Civil society and the coercive State were merging into one. Instead of "the King's two bodies" in harmonious balance, clearly showing where the state ended and society began, the separate entities were swallowed by bureaucratic organisations which grew gigantic. And each citizen was actually given a "personal code number" (a governmental measure which the US Congress once indignantly scrapped because it endangered a most fundamental human right). Today computers are able to dissect our lives. By coding our numbers on to a screen, computers can reveal which restaurants we dine at, when we travel abroad, and which social or inherited diseases we may be suffering from. In Scandinavia today it is impossible to disappear, in the sense of "getting away", though this has somehow always been an indisputable, if unstated, human right.

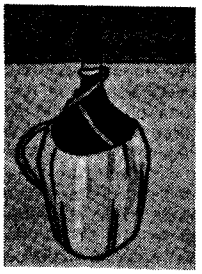
—And yet one cannot overlook certain political and, far more eloquently, artistic voices that seem to be at once universal and in the indigenous tradition of self-critical dissent.

STANGERUP: There is one Scandinavian artist, our only artist of world renown, who has kept on exploring the loneliness of man and the absence of God. In his films from this period, *The Communion*, *Through a Glass Darkly*, *The Silence*, and *Hour of the Wolf*, he revealed a Scandinavia quite different from the new, shiny, progressive Utopia. He was violently attacked by the New Left, for whom concepts such as fear, guilt, repentance, and despair evidently belonged in "the ashcan of history." During the 1960s and 1970s, Ingmar Bergman was sustained by the profound interest shown in America and in France for his "private", "irrational" universe. In a similar way, today it is Americans who, with their monumental Princeton edition of Kierkegaard's collected works, have been opening the eyes of the Danes to the genius of their countryman. If the Scandinavian ideological powers-that-be could have their way, then Bergman, Kierkegaard, and Ibsen would be unceremoniously buried and obliterated. For it's ever so inconvenient to be burdened with a *soul* if one is to function loyally as a good round number in the tidy files of the registry state.

WAS THE IDEOLOGICAL PENETRATION *of the Scandinavian scene so deep and decisive then? After all, the romanticism of the '68 generation faded within a decade in the rest of Europe and in the USA. Or were you Scandinavians, having been the very first to move forward on the path of what was called by Marquis Childs, in his famous book, the "Middle Way" revolution, so much more vulnerable to yet another leap forward?*

STANGERUP: Up through the 1970s we were inundated, especially in Denmark, by a wave of neo-Marxism of a brand

Booze & Libbers



New York City

THE NATIONAL **Organisation for Women yesterday urged Mayor Koch to veto a bill that would require places serving alcoholic beverages to post warnings that drinking during pregnancy can cause birth defects.**

Barbara Rochman, president of NOW's city chapter, contended that the posters would lead to "harassment" of pregnant women in bars and restaurants.

But the mayor immediately rejected NOW's request.

IN HER LETTER *to the mayor, Miss Rochman said the drinking warning should not be confined to pregnant women.*

"To single out pregnant women as a class is not only unfair, but may violate New York State law against sex discrimination in places of public accommodation."

"The bill may seem innocuous, but it does establish a precedent which could lead to much greater restrictions on women's reproductive freedom, in the future."

Koch said he was "truly shocked" by Miss Rochman's comment that the proposed legislation would be "protecting the unborn at the expense of women's freedom."

Koch, who intends to sign the bill tomorrow, added: "It's a warning in the same way that we warn pregnant women about various medicines which have special side effects on the unborn. Should we stop doing that? I hardly think so."

Koch said his only misgiving about the bill was that many women would not heed the poster just as many ignore the cancer warnings on cigarette packs.

"If I had my way, I would put a skull and crossbones on the poster."

LOBBYING *on the poster bill was heavy, with the liquor industry, Restaurant Assn, and Chamber of Commerce opposed.*

The Health Commissioner and the National Council on Alcoholism support it.

Allan Luks, executive director of the Alcoholism Council, said that fetal alcohol syndrome is the third most common cause of retardation due to birth defects and the only one that is entirely preventable.

But Miss Rochman said alcohol posed potential hazards to both sexes and cited studies showing that "male sperm is affected by the use of alcohol."

NEW YORK POST

[2] See David Gress, "Waiting for Fortinbras", ENCOUNTER, February 1982.

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more Teutonic than that known in the Anglo-Saxon world. We were, it was said, in the midst of a "late capitalistic phase"; our prosperity began to wane, the rosy Social Democratic dream paled, children in their glass-plated schools were troubled by migraine and swollen feet. It even became obvious that psychologists and sexologists could not abolish loneliness. Here in our Nordic Utopia we began to itch, to scratch each other's eyes out. But instead of reconsidering and deriving fresh strength from our "Scandinavian renaissance", instead of taking a critical look at ourselves, the prevalent ideological thinkers of our orthodox mind-set confined us even deeper in the black hole; and if we surfaced at all, we were unable to recognise our human essence and historic heritage.

In our little corner of the world where we had come through the brutal class war, thanks to our good old Tom Paine sort of common sense, our "liberalism by temperament and socialism by sentiment", the polemic now turned everything into an ingeniously reasoned *Them* and *Us*—as demanded, as commanded, by the *Zeitgeist*. The media aristocracy convinced itself and the others that we were the poor *Us* who had to fight the enemy, *Them*: namely, all individualists past and present, all enterprising independents, and such uncontrollable dissidents as farmers, artists, and thinkers. This time not only Kolakowskian "conservatism" was rejected. This time "liberalism" was also thrown out of the window.

The objective foreign observer cannot possibly imagine how much energy was channelled into the hate with which the "New Left" of the media and university worlds—especially in a little country where everyone keeps an eye on everyone else—used to oppose all manifestations which were not Marxist-Socialist and which were not aimed at Big Brother's takeover of the means of production. Hans Christian Andersen was written off by the *Ideologikritik* as a feudal snob, Pontoppidan and Kierkegaard as . . . no, it's not even worth recapitulating and refuting. Everyone thought they were Brecht, but really they were only new Babbitts.

In fact, I often felt that the only difference between Denmark and the *DDR* (just across the Baltic sea-lane from Bornholm) was that in Denmark the intellectuals have been voluntarily choosing their subjugation. And, if a culture can be judged by its art, the result was that we have only an anaemic spiritual life. Our novels imitated the newest American novels about the sexual problems of 49-year-old university professors; our poetry aped long-since-outdated West Coast experimental verse; our theatre was drained of drama; and our films were such that during the so-called cultural campaign, "Scandinavia Today" (USA, 1981–83), American film critics walked out of the cinemas, unable to find a shred of mature thought or the "true" Denmark to which they were accustomed from Andersen and Carl Dreyer.

There were, of course, some solitary exceptions: a good novel here, an admirable collection of verse there, a documentary film. But cowardice, mediocrity, and lack of existential soul—this was all Kierkegaard's homeland could offer in the 1970s as far as art went, and all because the "noble lie", or Ibsenesque corruption, was slowly strangling our courage to create that recognition (*Genkendelighed*), which Kierkegaard sought in his struggle against the 19th-century Establishment. It is superfluous to add that during this period the global arch-enemy became not only the Americans but also the Israelis. After having welcomed a flood of enthusiastic young Scandinavians to its *kibbutz* communities, Israel was now attacked so harshly on all sides that nasty old Julius Streicher in his grave could be satisfied that he had not lived in vain. "Anti-capitalism . . . anti-Semitism." What could the fine old Danish tradition of anti-anti-Semitism do here?

YOU'VE BEEN PEPPERING *your remarks with references to Orwell. Is this merely the passing vocabulary of the "1984" celebrations, or is there a more significant pertinence?*

STANGERUP: I find it hopeful that we're having a revival of interest in Orwell. Some are trying hard to negate it, but it is the same Orwell who from the late 1940s through the '50s provided a staple of spiritual nourishment for the old guard of anti-Communist, anti-totalitarian Social Democrats: "plodding workaday chaps", as Günter Grass once praised them, who came from the people with its robust good sense and not from the fashionable intellectual élites.

Little by little, some aspects of things are getting better in Denmark today. Marxism is on the wane. There is an awakening intellectual pluralism; a healthy scepticism about the cant of Progress and Planning; an increasing fascination with individual differences, with private complexities and their mysteries; a resurgent willingness to take initiatives, material and spiritual, without first securing the blessing of Mother State. We have not yet reached the point of no return.

This is not so much because Denmark at the moment happens to have a conservative-liberal government (it may, true to recent pattern, topple tomorrow). I mean, rather, that among Social Democrats there is a growing uncertainty about the Great Programme of Total Happiness. It seems as if once again our largest party is beginning to realise that if it is to govern, it must do so with a deep regard for the ordinary and quite healthy common sense of the people, who desire neither Right nor Left, neither conservatism, liberalism, nor socialism, but a tolerant, viable combination of all strands. As Denmark now takes a pause for thought, it is probable that artists and intellectuals will dare to reject the utopianism which has affected them—utopias governed by ideas and concepts which have almost all been imported from our large Hegelian neighbour to the south, and against which Kierkegaard (since his studies in Hegel's Berlin) fought to his death.

—But if there is a political context to the various movements of ideas and cultural ideals, then surely the return of Olof Palme to power in Stockholm is of significance?

STANGERUP: Unlike Denmark, Sweden today may well be taking its last fatal steps into the nothingness of Utopia. Four years with a conservative-liberal coalition government brought little reorientation and nothing new; for in the long years of opposition they became completely unused to the habit of governing and of thinking about real alternatives. By and large, the coalition simply carried on progressive, forward-looking

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policies as dictated by the predominantly Social Democratic bureaucracy which was only awaiting Olof Palme's return to power. Whereas Denmark has influential political groupings on both the right and the left of the Social Democrats, the Swedish Social Democratic party is a monolithic mass. At present it is, in my view, in the course of transforming Sweden from an open Western society to a new kind of system, a state which can best be described as a kind of *DDR* combined with a dynamic of American "know-how", and with a third uniquely Swedish element: the belief that governments can legislate for goodness.

THE QUESTION OF HOW "TOTALITARIAN" *such developments truly are is a thorny issue of disputation throughout the West. We all recall the surprise, if not shock, at the use of the word by Roland Huntford when he wrote his very controversial book about Sweden called "The New Totalitarians." Obviously you'd tend to go along with his thesis?*

STANGERUP: Ten years ago, the English journalist Roland Huntford was jeered at when he published his now-classic Orwellian critique of the "New Totalitarians." He described Sweden as a society which had evolved from an absolutist centralistic monarchy directly into an absolutist centralistic social democracy. Sweden, in other words, jumped over the Voltairean Enlightenment, whose spirit is still ingrained in Danes and will at the last minute—let us hope—save us from "1984" or a Brave New World, from the shadows of Orwell and Huxley.

The new Swedish constitution states that freedom of speech may be suspended "under certain conditions." In Sweden, children whose parents box their ears have to lodge a complaint with the local *barnpsyk*; child psychologists are now stationed in every sizeable town and have the right to separate, divide, or otherwise split up families. In Sweden, Olof Palme tried—and may try again—to make it impossible to sue leading state officials. In Sweden, children are forbidden to walk their dogs on the street or to build medieval sandcastles on the muddy beaches. Alcoholics must be under constant supervision; and psychiatrists will soon be taking over the work of judges, if things are to be decided by certain eloquent, extremist sociologists who are obsessed by the thought of a "Good Society" in which personal guilt and responsibility have been abolished. The total collective must be a "healthy" efficient community whose population is systematically deterred, even simply prohibited, from smoking, drinking, hiding; where children are not allowed to play with "militaristic" toys; a community in which troublesome civil freedoms can be abolished from one day to the next; and in which the commanding heights of the economy are controlled by Social Democratic trusts and foundations.[3]

This is no longer merely a dark thought in the mind of a Huxley or an Orwell. Or indeed in my own mind some years ago when I wrote my book *The Man Who Wanted to be Guilty* and was denounced by a number of Danish and Swedish critics for having written "a novel of the future with a message from the past. . . ." In many ways contemporary Sweden is a science-fiction invention, a country led by a Prime Minister who does not miss a chance to preach to the world about how felicitous things ought to be, and soon will be. (Aside, of course, from those intrusive Soviet submarines, but they do always obligingly go away after being detected. . . .)

The Swedish writer Jan Myrdal—son of our social-democratic saints Alvar and Gunnar, and a strange combination of the spirit of Mao and Voltaire—is one of the Swedish intellectuals who have declared themselves in print against Olof Palme "the powermonger." His anxiety strikes an echo. Will we soon have an apathetic populace which will be more and more like zombies: physically healthy and athletic, but soulless? That is the Sweden which a few solitary writers foresee. Had the intellectuals paid attention to "the new totalitarianism" ten years ago, things might perhaps have been different. But at that time Sweden was so busy acting as the "troubled conscience" of the entire world and pointing out its "Third Way" that to dare criticise Sweden was considered sinful. Huntford wrote in vain.

There are, of course, other signs of resistance in Sweden. But with the return of Olof Palme, Swedish life is now being arranged so that the new totalitarians can hold the country in their grip—in the name of organisational felicity and a simple but spurious ideal of goodness. Sweden may soon be devoid of that Kierkegaardian quality of "recognition" and turn into a well-oiled piece of social machinery, a vacuum in which dissent or protest is non-existent. If current tendencies continue, before the end of this century Sweden may already be an ingeniously Western form of totalitarian social order. I am tempted to venture the argument that the Poles today are freer than our Swedes; for the Poles are free in the most important way: in soul, in thought. When the Polish shipyard workers knelt down on the Lenin wharf to pray to the Virgin Mary—recall that newspaper and TV-screen picture which sent shock waves through secular, no-nonsense Scandinavia—was it not the spectacle of an entire people saying No to Utopia? Was it not a victory of spirit over power?

—Well, whether one calls it "totalitarian" or "authoritarian" or an overgrown, overprotective, overcentralised Welfare Statism, are there Scandinavian (not Polish) resources for resistance, or do you remain pessimistic?

STANGERUP: What do the Swedes of today have to fortify themselves with? Nothing much, other than remnants of that dry moralising Lutheranism which Ingmar Bergman depicted so harshly in his recent and masterly film *Fanny and Alexander*. The alternatives he suggests are to be found not only in art . . . but also in the resources of mystical introspection, even of Jewish cabbalism. But, as always, Bergman speaks only for himself: the last dissident.

Anthony Burgess, author of the post-Orwellian prophecy *1985*, said when he visited Scandinavia—"I prefer anarchy." It is not the Baltic Sea which divides Lech Walesa from Olof Palme. It is an endless ocean.

[3] See Jytte Bonnier, "Letter from Sweden", ENCOUNTER, June 1981.

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LETTERS

"Cairo Memory"

AMONG THE "SHORT-LIVED LITERARY reviews" mentioned by Magdi Wahba in his wonderfully evocative "Cairo Memories" (ENCOUNTER, May), *Orientations* deserves to be remembered. Started by the late (alas!) G. S. Fraser, it printed an article by the artist and engraver Bernard Rice, illustrated by spectacular woodcuts of Yugoslav mountains under the title, "Land of the Chetniks." Who was to know that the decision had been taken to withdraw all support from the Chetniks and support Tito's partisans instead, swallowing the whole line about Chetnik "collaboration" and so on?

G.H.Q. Middle East took over *Orientations*, putting in a safe padre as editor. The contents shifted from things like "The Wasteland Revisited" to things like "Christmas Thoughts of the Old Country", and the magazine became indeed short-lived.

DAVE WALLIS

Walton-on-Naze
Essex

Whose Peace, What Peace?

WITH MUCH INTEREST I read the article by Michael Howard, "The Concept of Peace" (in ENCOUNTER, December 1983), and the contents of the "box", giving his ideas as published in the *Sunday Times*. We, in the Middle East, are these days often the objects of different Peace Initiatives and Plans, conceived by others, who have admittedly a strong interest in an uninterupted flow of oil and oil dollars from our area, but have not the slightest idea of what in reality is the content of the concept of peace of those whose interests they proclaim to have at heart.

Often we Palestinians, Jews and Arabs alike, use the word peace in our very similar languages: *Shalom*, *Salaam*, but it is important to understand the concept, the intrinsic word-value, of these expressions.

In Hebrew the word means "peace, well-being, completeness", as the outcome of full harmony in society. In Arabic it means also peace, well-being, harmony, but as the outcome of submission to authority, such as total submission to God, to Allah = Islam. Here, the real concepts are totally different, and this forms one of the fearsome barriers on the way to construct peace in this war-torn Middle East. One party looks for harmony, enabling a free flow of people, ideas and progress between former enemies, while the other party looks for total submission to their concept of justice and righteousness. So both are right, or in their rights, however unable to realise the peace they both long to achieve.

It would, therefore, be much advisable to abandon the fallacious use of the word "peace" in seeking solutions for the problems of the Middle East and instead to make a supreme effort to propagate understanding and open-mindedness for each other's ideas and values.

In our Middle East context, the use of the word "*peace*" by political movements and by official personalities is raising totally different expectations and concepts between the members of the opposing cultures, religions and societies; concepts which, to our mutual regret, are totally inconsistent and incompatible with each other and therefore impossible to achieve.

It may even be true to say that it may be better to conserve now a *status quo* than to press for speedy changes, thus enabling the opposing parties to learn to understand the other's views and to grasp the word-value of their statements, so self-evident for the one and so fatally misunderstood by the other.

During this present period of history—which bears witness to a growing surge of cultural and religious intransigency, to a greater stress on dissimilarities than on what unites and binds together, true as well for the individual as for societies and cultural-religious groups—it is of foremost importance to learn to understand the other. Let us therefore make a supreme effort to understand the language of our fellow-man, and especially that of our opponents, the meaning of his words, his terminology, and his concepts, which are so often taken and reacted upon, without further thought as to their intrinsic content.

Michael Howard's article deserves to be translated in many languages. Maybe it will contribute to a better understanding between people and peoples.

G. J. SYLVAIN KAHN

Holon, Israel

E. P. Thompson's Reply

SINCE GERALD FROST ("Portrait of a Peace-Fighter", ENCOUNTER, May) does not engage in any serious way with my writings, but contents himself with anecdotes and press cuttings, he leaves me with little to reply to.

If Mr Frost wishes to know my views on Marxism, he need not make a mystery of this from second-hand reports. He can read *The Poverty of Theory* (Merlin, 1978) where this is discussed at painful length. He will find that I distinguish between *Marxisms*, which are defined as closed intellectual systems within which self-validating concepts circulate; and more open Marxist traditions, in which certain concepts or hypotheses derivative from Marx are open to empirical development or refutation. I have long polemicised against Marxisms of the first kind; in my practice as an historian I owe much to traditions of the second kind.

Since I have written out my own intellectual accounts in such detail it is absurd to imply that I have disguised them. I could better understand a critic who finds my accounts tedious. I find this business of submitting intellectuals to loyalty tests, for or against something called "Marxism", very tedious myself.

In the last two pages of his scatter-shot ("The Prophet Motive", pp. 24-25) Mr Frost purports to comment on my debate in the Oxford Union with Mr Caspar Weinberger, and to quote from me verbatim. I have compared his quotations with the transcript of the debate provided to me by the BBC. Every single purported quotation is wrong, no doubt because Mr Frost found note-taking difficult in that "hot and uncomfortable" place.

But this cannot explain the extreme selectivity of Mr Frost's account. Perhaps he was wearing an ideological hearing-aid which excluded whatever he did not wish to hear? When I remarked that after World War II there was a vision "extending to the United States and the Soviet Union of a socialist and democratic world—we have to retrace our steps back to the point where 'Yalta' was fixed and try to unscramble it" (BBC transcript) Mr Frost heard only "we had a vision, a socialist vision, of a classless society." Where I argued that the "Yalta" division of Europe must eventually be resolved by the withdrawal of forces on *both* sides—that is, of Soviet forces and bases from East and Central Europe and of United States forces and bases from Western Europe—Mr Frost reports me simply as demanding "the unconditional withdrawal of . . . all US missiles . . . *and* all US military forces."

That is not fair comment nor fair anything. I know very well that this perspective of overcoming the division of Europe by congruent initiatives from both sides—a perspective which is contested as furiously (and suppressed as furtively) by Soviet bloc ideologists as it is by Mr Frost—is open to many criticisms, and perhaps to the charge of utopianism. But the idea is coming now in voices from the dissident East as well as within the peace movements of the West. George Konrad, the Hungarian novelist, has called recently for an "historic compromise" between the blocs of this order (*Anti-politics*) and spokespersons of Charter 77 have been raising similar questions (*Voices from Prague*). Are readers of ENCOUNTER so delicate that they cannot be informed that the proposals have been made?

In and out of this Mr Frost nudge-nudges readers into supposing that I am disguising my socialist convictions in the interest of manipulating a peace movement for my own ulterior purposes. I am happy to reassure him. I remain of the same political persuasion as William Morris, and my distaste of every form of statism grows with each year. But my own political preferences have little bearing on the aims of the peace movement, or of CND or END. These are alliances of persons of different tendency, working in good faith towards the common aim of ensuring the con-

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Djilas, the Police, & a Lecture in Belgrade

WHO WERE the 27 people who gathered to hear your lecture?

DJILAS: They couldn't really be called a group. They were young people of various political orientations, from leftist to liberal-conservative. On the average they were about 30, most of them 26-to-35, only a few were over 40. They have been meeting in private apartments for several years, but even in earlier times they used occasionally to get together. There was no obligatory membership; anyone who was invited decided for himself whether he would attend the meeting or not. Some who attended the meetings at the beginning have stopped; some new members have joined the group. I had never attended such meetings previously.

The authorities were well-informed about the existence of the group; and they have, if unwillingly, tolerated its activity. From time to time, some individuals taking part in the activities were summoned by the police and were told that what they were doing was "against the law" and that they should stop. However, this was not really "political activity" at all, since at the meetings someone usually delivered a lecture on a purely theoretical problem and there was discussion afterwards. I was invited just a few days before the police intervened; and it was left to me to decide what I wanted to talk about. I decided to speak on the "National Question", including the relationships among the nationalities in Yugoslavia.

—How were the actual arrests carried out?

DJILAS: It happened on 20 April at about 8.00 p.m. We gathered together about 7.00 p.m. that evening, and I started my lecture at about 7.15. I intended to speak for about half an hour. In fact, this was not a real lecture at all, but more of an introduction to discussion. I indicated some of the fundamental ideas I considered to be basic. At about ten to eight, just when I had finished my introductory remarks, the first question was raised. As I was about to answer, policemen entered the apartment, filling the relatively small rooms. We had all gone into the apartment without any anxiety, and nobody had tried to enter secretly.

The police entry was aggressive but not brutal. We were not assaulted. I was taken out first, and had to wait for the police wagon. The back-yard and the front street were both blocked by, I think, 30-to-40 policemen in uniform or in civilian clothes. The action was carried out in a perfectly organised manner; there was no hesitation, no unnecessary action. Everything was well prepared and planned in advance. I was then taken away in a car, and later I learned that the same had happened to the others. Altogether 27 others were taken to the large police station (where documents such as driving-licences or passports are usually issued). It is not a jail but an administrative centre.

I WAS ACCOMPANIED by two policemen into a room. First they carried out a personal search; at about midnight I was taken home where a search of my apartment began and it took about four hours. They confiscated a great number of books and manuscripts. Then I was brought back to the same police station and held until 3:00 the next afternoon. Then I was released.

In the meantime I was interrogated. The questions were quite simple. I was asked who had invited me, what the subject of my lecture had been, and with whom I was acquainted. The same questions were put to the others who were arrested. But I didn't see anyone from the group in the police station; I was completely isolated. The treatment was correct, nothing bad could be said about it. I remained seated the entire time and kept silent. The police were silent, too.

Evidently the same happened to the others. Those who were not released were transferred the next day, 21 April, to the so-called "Central Jail." This is a large prison in Belgrade, built in the immediate post-War years.

—What happened then to all those who were detained, including your lawyer?

DJILAS: By Tuesday [24 April] all but two who had been in custody were released. On Tuesday evening the remaining two were also freed, so that now there was nobody left in prison.

As far as my lawyer, Srdja Popovic, is concerned, he was not with me at the meeting I attended but was taken into custody yesterday [Tuesday] evening. His apartment and office were searched; and then at about 9 p.m. he was taken into custody (and released the next morning). I have no explanation for his detention. The only possible reason might be that, since he is the most famous lawyer for "political cases" in Yugoslavia, the police might have wanted to prevent him from defending members of the group.

—Why did they do it? What is its significance?

DJILAS: It is very difficult to say. There are several possibilities. In the first place, it was aimed at preventing further meetings of this group. Another important motive could have been their wish to make my participation in any activity impossible—even in a case such as this, which is really insignificant.

There is a third possible reason for this move, and it has a more general significance. As you perhaps know, during the past two years Belgrade has become the most liberal city in Yugoslavia. The Belgrade press is the most liberal in the country. A great number of public forums operate in Belgrade in which political issues are freely discussed. There are also a number of theatres performing political plays. In recent months, however, the authorities have put pressure on the press, theatres, and other public forums. It is quite clear that one of the reasons for the detention of the group was to let everybody know that such activities will no longer be tolerated. This was certainly the main reason for the action.

I should also mention that during the search of my apartment, documents belonging to my son Aleksa Djilas were taken. He is now in West Germany, working at an institute where he is preparing for his doctoral degree. He is also a dissident, and during the whole search the police showed very great interest in him, in his work, and in articles he wrote for the foreign press.

—What views were you presenting in your lecture on Yugoslavia's National Question?

DJILAS: I selected this theme because it is a topical issue in the country. It will become even more topical because of Yugoslavia's federal structure, since, as you know, Yugoslavia is a "multinational" country; because the structure of government does not function; and because of economic differences and the resulting disunity. These reflect not only the structural weaknesses and inflexibility of the system but also differences among the various national and republican leaderships and their economic interests: differences between the Republics, on the one hand, and the Federal centre, on the other. My point was to demonstrate that in Yugoslavia no single national group has a clear perspective of the future and, therefore, no single group can win. At the same time, however, there is a trend in Yugoslavia that cannot be stopped by administrative or police measures. An ever greater emancipation of Yugoslavia's nations will lead to a confederate structure. My thesis was that no single national group is actually opposed to Yugoslavia. But as a result of systemic and structural weaknesses, Yugoslavia is slowly disintegrating as a state and as a power system. . . .

MILOVAN DJILAS **has been living (and writing) in relative freedom in Belgrade since his last imprisonment by the Yugoslav police. The events of 20-21 April were discussed by him in a telephone interview conducted by a correspondent of Radio Free Europe in Munich. For a fuller exposition of his views see his long interview with George Urban in** ENCOUNTER, **December 1979.**

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tinuance of civilised society. As far as I am concerned, successor generations can decide on the political and social systems of their choice. What we have to ensure today is that there will be successor generations and a meaningful choice.

E. P. THOMPSON

Upper Wick
Worcester

I AM INDEBTED to E. P. Thompson for taking time off from his duties at the "coal-face" of the Peace Movement to add so graphically to my catalogue of inconsistencies and contradictions in his "position" on the issues of war and peace. Affecting a lofty disdain, he dismisses my criticisms on the grounds that these are based on mere journalism and anecdote, and therefore unworthy of reply (although he still obliges by providing one). But connoisseurs of Thompson will know how extensively he himself relies on press clippings and indeed anecdotes, both in his historical works and in his peace-fighting essays.[1]

1. The riposte is made the more curious by the fact that three-quarters of those "press cuttings" to which he so contemptuously refers are lengthy personal pronouncements by an assiduous free-lance journalist, signed "E. P. Thompson." Indeed, in the pages of my essay I quoted no less than fourteen times from articles by him in newspapers and journals (and I endeavoured to do so more fully and fairly than *he* has quoted those with whom *he* disagrees). In any event, he is in error in saying that I contented myself with occasional journalism. I also drew heavily upon his contributions to *Protest and Survive*, *Writing by Candlelight*, and *Zero Option*, as well as from numerous personal letters to *The Times*; on a general election polemic entitled *The Defence of Britain*; and on two speeches which I took the trouble to go and listen to, plus much else by way of background research. (I even ploughed through *The Poverty of Theory*, 1978, which does indeed induce the sense of tedium to which he refers.)

When Thompson asserts that he finds "little to reply to", I would remind him that that "little" includes my theses that, in arguing the case for unilateral disarmament, he has been guilty of intellectual inconsistency, political double-talk, diplomatic evasion, and journalistic carelessness, and that I cited chapter and verse from Thompson's own writings in support of that "little." If Thompson believes that such inconsistencies and failings are of no account because some of the occasions for these lapses were articles in our newspapers, then he must surely harbour a deep contempt for his readers.

[1] In his relatively brief essay "Exterminism and Cold War" there are at least twenty references to newspaper items, and in his magnum opus, *The Making of the English Working Class*, many hundreds. These are, after all, generally considered by historians to be "primary sources."

2. E. P. Thompson alleges that I do not engage his writings "in any serious way." Anyone who has read his work will recognise the indefatigable repetition of certain themes: the alleged moral symmetry of the superpowers; the greater danger presented by the US because of its more inventive defence establishment and its growing militarism; the assumed tendency of capitalist and Marxist/Leninist ideologues to exacerbate the expansionist and aggressive characteristics in each other; the belief that civilisation has entered a terminal condition, etc. All of these themes are specifically referred to, and I endeavoured to show why I thought his supporting arguments were feeble or inconsistent, and why the empirical evidence (Thompson assures us that, unlike some unreconstructed Marxists, he takes empirical data most seriously) invalidates his position rather than supports it. I scarcely expected him to agree with my criticisms. Still, I did not expect the evasive intellectual timidity displayed in his reply.

3. As for the anecdotal evidence which Thompson likewise regards as irrelevant or trivial, I would point out that this was based on the recorded experiences of two Soviet dissidents with Thompson, and behaviour on his part which struck me as quite hypocritical and rather cynical. One of them, Sergei Batovrin (founder of the "Moscow Group for the Establishment of Trust"), was greeted warmly by Thompson ("with flowers") soon after his expulsion from the Soviet Union. Thompson, who had condemned Western journalists for exploiting dissidents in order to obtain "cold war copy", subsequently exploited that meeting in a General Election polemic designed to win support for unilateralist candidates. By listing the things which Batovrin did not say (and comparing him to the peace protestors at Upper Heyford and Greenham Common), he gave admittedly only a hazy impression of the dissident's views. But you could certainly never guess that, when interviewed subsequently, Batovrin described the Peace Movement as having reached dangerous and absurd conclusions about Soviet intentions and went on to accuse it of being a more "dependable ally" of the USSR than the Western Communist Parties. In his reply Thompson ignores the revealing incident of his meeting with Batovrin, and also deems his friend's views—based on much bitter and first-hand experience—unworthy of comment. Was this because part of what I had to say was merely anecdotal, or because Batovrin's views were set out in the form of journalism? Perhaps the explanation is that his views (like those of another member of the Group, Oleg Popov, whom Thompson denounced in *The Times*) reveal damning inadequacies in Thompson's case.

4. Thompson rejects my assertion that he regards the Peace Movement as a valuable tool in the "socialisation of society" even though, as I pointed out, he has previously said that it serves exactly that function. Upon this contradiction he heaps yet another; for he is at pains to insist that his central beliefs remain "the same." As a matter of simple logic, at least one of these statements must be false.

5. In any event, why assure us that his political views have "little bearing" on the matter? If, as he says, his only concern is to find ways of saving the world so that "successor generations" can make their meaningful choice, is he putting the burning issues of capitalism *v.* socialism, liberation *v.* imperialism (etc.) all in political cold storage? Many of his Left-wing colleagues in CND and END make no bones about their belief that the Peace Movement can serve "revolutionary" purposes, and that since capitalism is the cause of war, no real peace can be achieved until it has been overthrown. (Moreover, much of this argument is couched in Marxist terminology and is dependent upon precisely those self-validating Marxist concepts which Thompson assures us play no role in his own intellectual approach.) His argument on these matters must be with *them*.

6. As for his criticism of my description of his Oxford Union debate with Caspar Weinberger, I regret it if my notes were not word-perfect (the substance of them coincides very closely with the newspaper reports that appeared at the time). I do not think I misrepresented his account of what should be the opening stage of that "great process" which he believes can heal the unresolved conflict in Europe. Unless we all misunderstood him, the process is to begin with the withdrawal of all US nuclear and conventional forces and personnel. Such a withdrawal would inevitably be unconditional since, in the absence of substantial military strength, no conditions could be effectively enforced upon the Soviet Union. Thompson assures us that he wishes to see "congruent initiatives" by the other side. But why so coy and so vague in his expectations in relation to the Soviet Union, when he is so exacting and specific in his demands upon the Americans? Are the Americans *more* culpable (end of East-West symmetry), or only more influenceable (ah, that little democratic difference)?

7. To lend credibility to his prophecy he quotes the lonely cry of one Hungarian novelist and the Czech Charter 77 group. But where will Thompson be when the new wave of his Eastern peace-fighters re-emphasise their essential anti-Communism? Is he so indelicate as to suppose that his public will forget such discarded props, once useful but then rejected in favour of new voices? When he was a believing Communist, E. P. Thompson presumably put his trust in Stalin and his generous and enlightened motivations. He was naive, and disappointed. And even today, in the East-West Peace Movement he finds himself constantly disappointed in the anti-Stalinists, those dissident voices who (like Sakharov) plead for Western strength to deter Eastern adventurism. Thompson is still not in tune with realities. Things were at least simpler in the old days.

GERALD FROST

London

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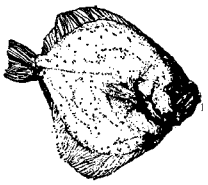
Life & Letters Today

Westminster



OUT OF PLAICE: *With fish and chips doused in salt and vinegar and wrapped in the latest edition of its paper, the American "International Herald Tribune" had planned to launch its "Guide to Business Travel and Entertainment" at the House of Lords yesterday.*

"We thought it was a wizard idea. Everyone loves fish and chips and as it's a European guide we felt we ought to hit them with a traditional English dish", said a spokesman.

To the relief of many—not least the book's gastronome English author Peter Graham—the plan was received with a resounding "no" by the catering department at the Lords which, horrified by the very suggestion, "indicated that it was not in character with the House of Lords." It served canapes instead.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Washington

MAD, HARD & COOL: *A lot—too much—is being made of that fact that Gary Hart legally changed his name from "Hartpence". It is being promoted as sinister by an American Press embarrassed that it never saw Hart coming. Still it's interesting—OK, mildly diverting—to wonder what similar contractions might have done to the course of public life of others if they'd been known as:*

George Wash, James Mad, Warren Hard, Harry Trum, Jimmy Cart, Franklin Delano Roo and Calvin Cool.

DAILY MAIL

London

THAT SORT OF THING: **A teenager accused of stabbing an eight-year-old boy through the heart enjoyed reading witchcraft and horror books, an Old Bailey jury was told today.**

The 15-year-old is alleged to have stabbed Aaron Lee 20 times, five of the wounds penetrating his heart. His head was severely crushed by a large concrete block. Aaron's battered body was found near a South London railway line in September. The killing was motiveless, claims the prosecution.

A psychiatrist said: "He told me he had few friends and liked reading books, detective stories, witchcraft, 'Frankenstein', 'Dracula', that sort of thing."

THE STANDARD

Welshpool

GOING THE WHOLE HOG: **"Hedgehog flavour" crisps have become big business since Mr Phil Lewis, of The Vaults pub in Welshpool, Powys, started making them as a joke. Customers demanded a change from smokey bacon and cheese and onion flavour.**

Yesterday the first lorryload of new approved "hedgehog crisps" left a factory at Newport, Gwent. The original home-made variety had been banned by Trading Standards officials as in breach of the Trade Descriptions Act. They were flavoured with pork fat and herbs.

But Mr Lewis beat the ban by getting scientists at Wolverhampton Polytechnic to develop a special "hedgehog flavouring" which he could use in the crisps. "We've been getting requests for the crisps from all over the place and we just couldn't keep up from our kitchen any longer, so we've gone into full-scale production", said Mr Lewis.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Baltimore, Md.

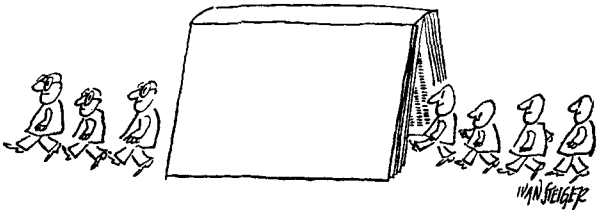
PATRIOTIC GORE: *Maryland is cleaning up its official language. Now that the American Civil War (1861-65) is over Maryland has got round to sanitising the passionate anti-Union sentiments of its state song, "Maryland, My Maryland." It is sung to the tune of "O Tannenbaum" (or, if you prefer, "The Red Flag"), is a classic of the Dixieland jazz repertoire but is, says one of the affronted, a "Confederate fight song dripping with hate."*

Well, it does refer to "Northern scum", describes Abe Lincoln as a "despot" and incites Marylanders to:

"Avenge the patriotic gore
That flecked the streets of Baltimore."

The new alternative words are less controversial, directing local pride to the state's natural beauty.

DAILY MAIL



Strasbourg

EUROBUMF: *One of the biggest burdens on the EEC budget is the cost of translating Eurobumf into the Community's seven official languages. So there ought to be some interest in a proposal from a British group, the Association of Translation Companies, to privatise the work, and save 80% of the estimated £250m annual bill.*

The present EEC system costs about £220 per thousand words translated, but a competitive rate would be nearer £45.

There is some scope for improving efficiency by computerising the work. A machine called "Eurodicautom" is already at translators' fingertips, to help them out with technical jargon in each of the Community's languages. Even more ambitious is the development by the commission of "Eurotra", a multilingual computer which understands ideas and phrases rather than just words, and can avoid the schoolboy howlers that earlier machines made.

The Community currently employs over 2,000 translators (excluding interpreters who do the oral work), 20% more than in 1979. The rise is due partly to the increased workload in the European Parliament but mainly to Greece's arrival on the scene, bringing the number of possible language combinations from 30 (6x5) to 42 (7x6). The addition of Spanish and Portuguese would mean a further leap to 72 combinations.

THE ECONOMIST

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Bright Ideas

THE EMBERS AND THE STARS
A Philosophical Inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature
Erazim Kohák
Ecological philosophy comes of age in this brilliant book in which Kohák, who rejects philosophies of lifeless matter, leads one instead to a vision of the cosmos in which the nature of persons is primordial.

THE IMPERATIVE OF RESPONSIBILITY *In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*
Hans Jonas
Jonas formulates a new set of ethical imperatives that deal not just with relations between people but that consider humanity's fate.

CRITIQUE OF SCIENTIFIC REASON
Kurt Hübner. Translated by Paul R. Dixon, Jr., and Hollis M. Dixon
This is the first English translation of a major German work in which Hübner rejects the idea that natural science is the sovereign domain of truth.

THE STRUCTURE OF EXPERIENCE
Kant's System of Principles
Gordon Nagel
In a landmark interpretation of Kant's "Analytic of Principles," Nagel argues that Kant's overall enterprise was neither epistemology nor cognitive psychology but a general theory that encompasses both.

SARTRE AND MARXIST EXISTENTIALISM *The Test Case of Collective Responsibility*
Thomas R. Flynn
Reinterpreting and evaluating Sartre's social and political philosophy, Flynn argues that the existential ethics of Sartre's early phase is consistent with his later Marxist-inspired writings.

THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU
Joel Schwartz
Schwartz penetrates the ambiguities in Rousseau's position on feminist theory: his professed egalitarianism on one hand and his apparent subjection of women to men on the other.

BEYOND NIHILISM
Nietzsche without Masks
Ofelia Schutte
Schutte seeks to read Nietzsche without the masks of cultural and intellectual biases imposed by so many of his previous interpreters. She shifts the view of him as prophet of nihilism to that of healer of nihilism.

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